presented earlier need to be incorporated into later methods. In teaching, I have found myself writing out a 'reminder list' of earlier methods and techniques, to ensure that the acquisition of skills does not get lost as the process becomes more complex. What to expect can be summarized briefly as follows:

Chapter 3 looks at basic piano improvisation techniques (many of which are adaptable to other instruments), starting with simple exercises and developing to musical skills that have more relevance in clinical application.

Chapter 4 defines and describes some of the most useful basic therapeutic methods, such as mirroring, matching, reflecting, grounding, dialoguing and accompanying, where the musical techniques are given a therapeutic direction or objective.

Chapter 5 begins to explore more advanced improvisational techniques, both for use in music making generally and for the purpose of therapeutic interventions. Extemporizing and the development of musical frameworks in improvisation are introduced here.

Chapter 6 introduces the use of transitions in improvisational music making, presenting and illustrating different types of transition, and explaining why they are so important in therapy.

Chapter 7 introduces the concept of thematic improvisation, where a small theme or 'leitmotif' containing rhythmic and melodic characteristics is used as a basis for developing an improvisation. Rhythmic and melodic forms of thematic improvisation are exemplified, and the influence of transference and counter-transference is discussed.

Chapter 8 presents some ideas for group improvisation, either using instruments alone or in combination with piano. Some of the author's ideas for 'warm-ups' are described in detail, following which improvisational frameworks are explained, giving a format of elements that can be drawn on to promote group process. Concrete, abstract and emotional themes are introduced here.

Chapter 9 presents two specific models of musical analysis that can be used in music therapy for describing or analysing the music in improvisations. This final chapter is intended to provide just two models that have been developed to look at and document the material that emerges in improvised music making, and identify either musical or therapeutic salience.

CHAPTER 3

Musical Techniques

3.1 Basic piano improvisation techniques

This chapter will present and describe a series of improvisational exercises that I use to promote and develop creative improvisation on the piano. The ideas can be taken and adapted to other instruments. The exercises are just as useful for people who have absolutely no training at all in playing the piano as for people who have studied piano, reached Grade 8 and are playing Beethoven Sonatas. The exercises are illustrated with notated examples in the text, some of which give a 'starting pattern' from which to begin. There will be examples of most of these musical techniques on the CD that comes with the book.

In order to develop our skills of improvising we find out most by listening to what we do. It often sounds very different when you listen to an improvisation that you have recorded compared with what you were aware of when you were actually participating or playing. It is a very good idea when trying out these exercises to record something you do and then listen to the sound you have made.

1-note and 2-note improvisations

The starting point I always take with improvisation is to *limit the material*. I notice a common mistake is the novice improviser's assumption that the more notes used – on a piano, guitar, xylophone or any other instrument – the more exciting and creative will be the improvisation. Actually, this often leads in another direction – into the land of chaos and over-production. My first challenge to any new improviser (or even someone quite experienced) is to be able to improvise creatively using only one tone, as exemplified in Figure 3.1.

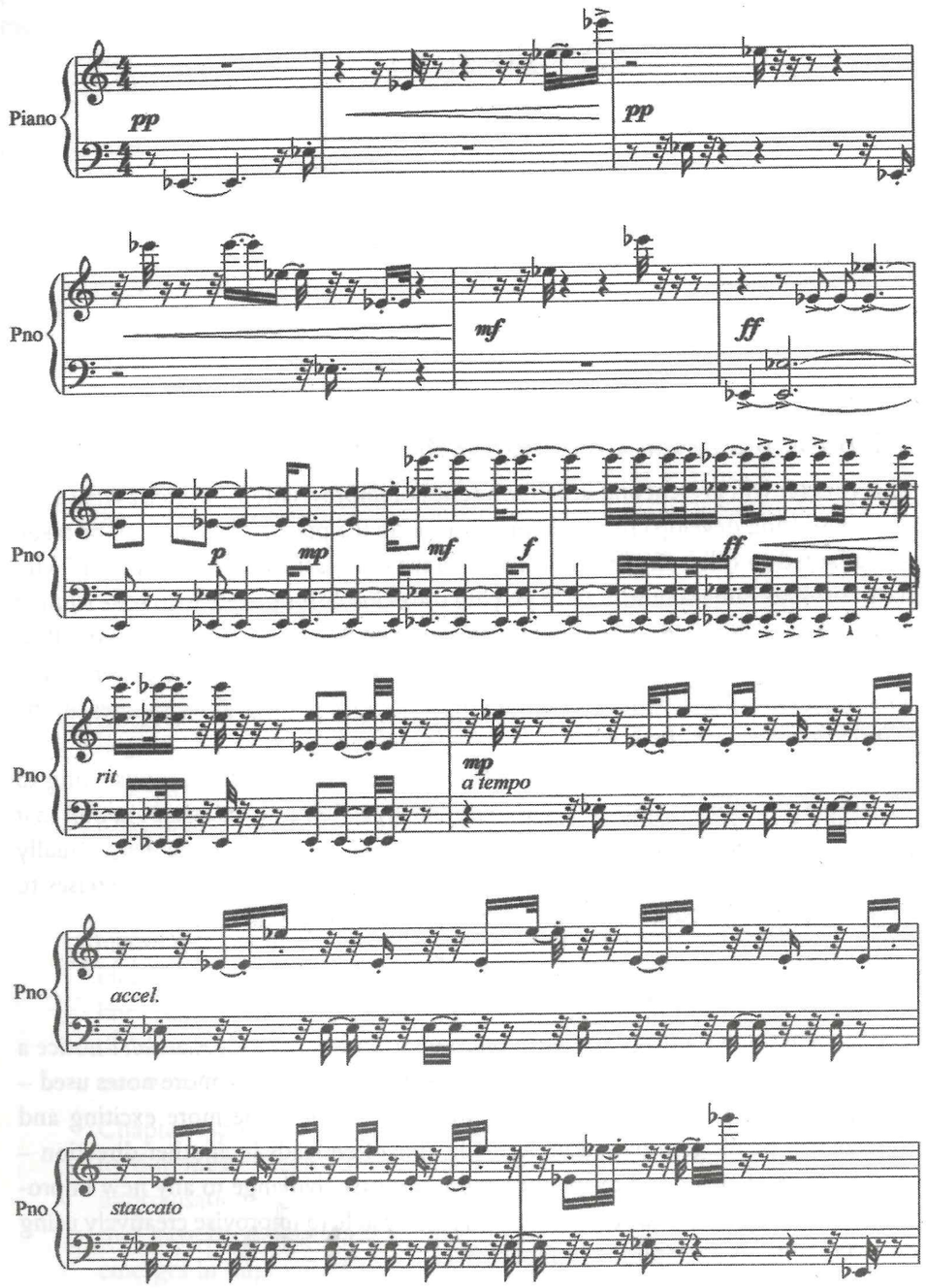
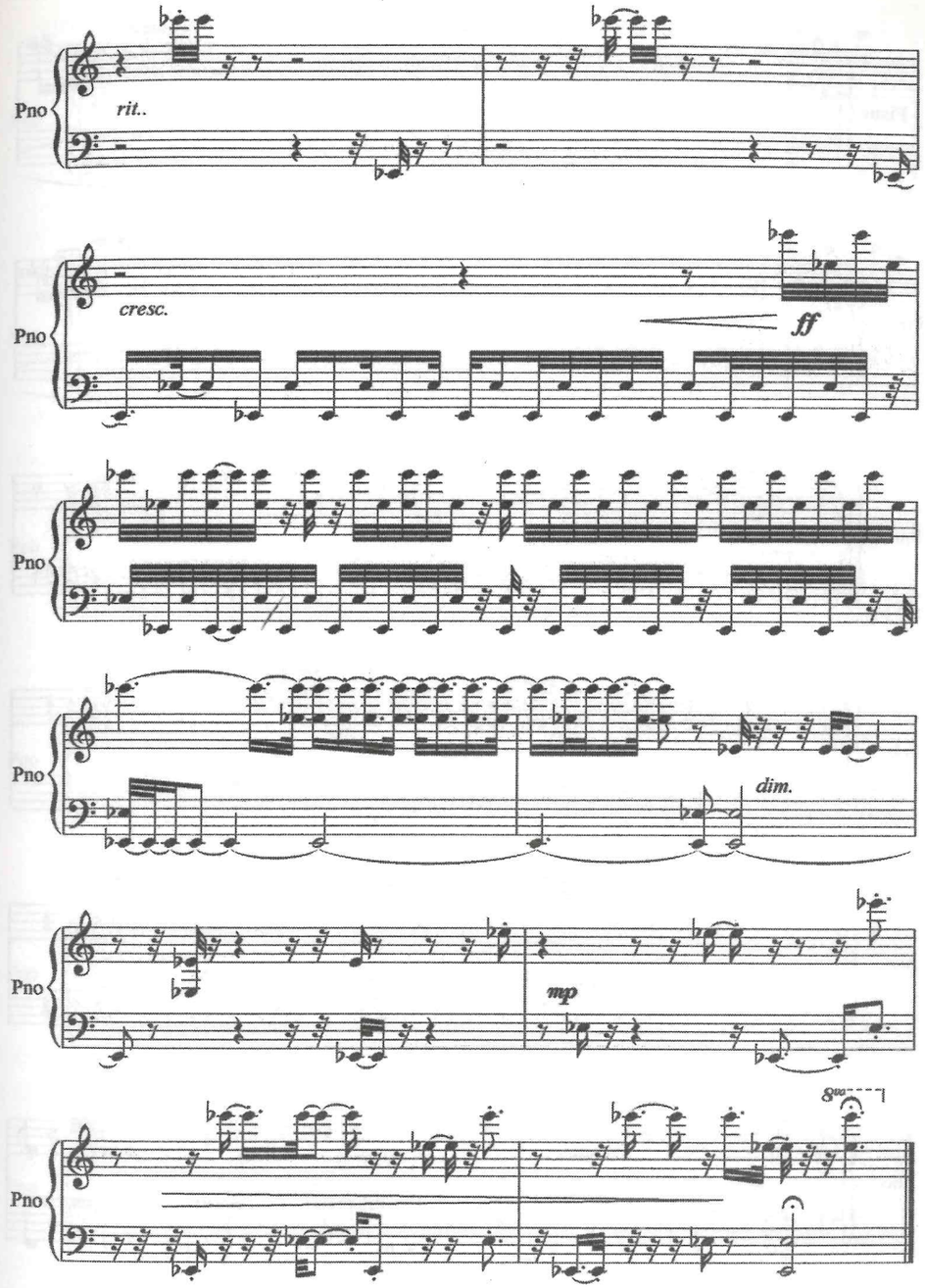


Figure 3.1: Example of 1-note improvisation



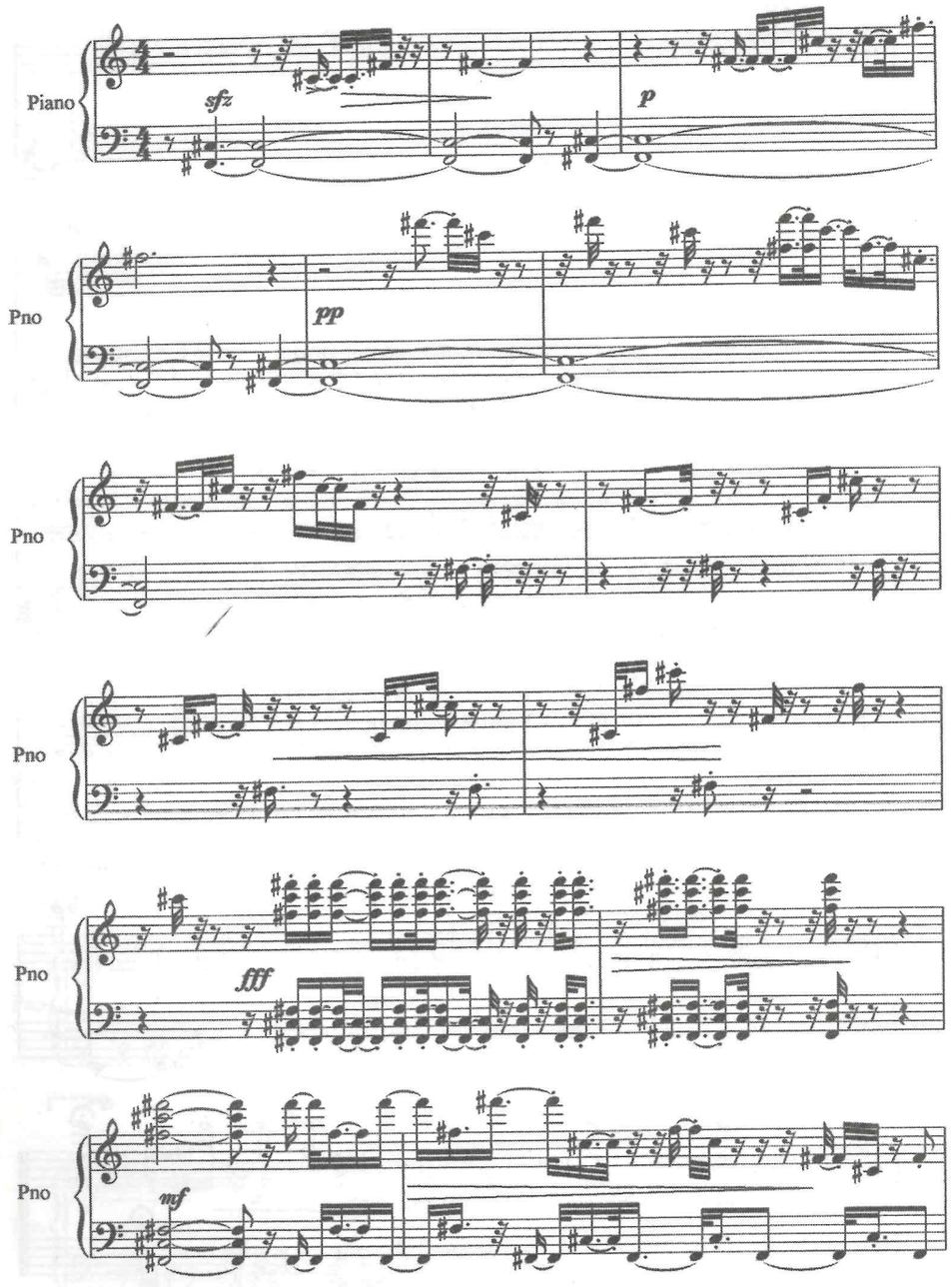
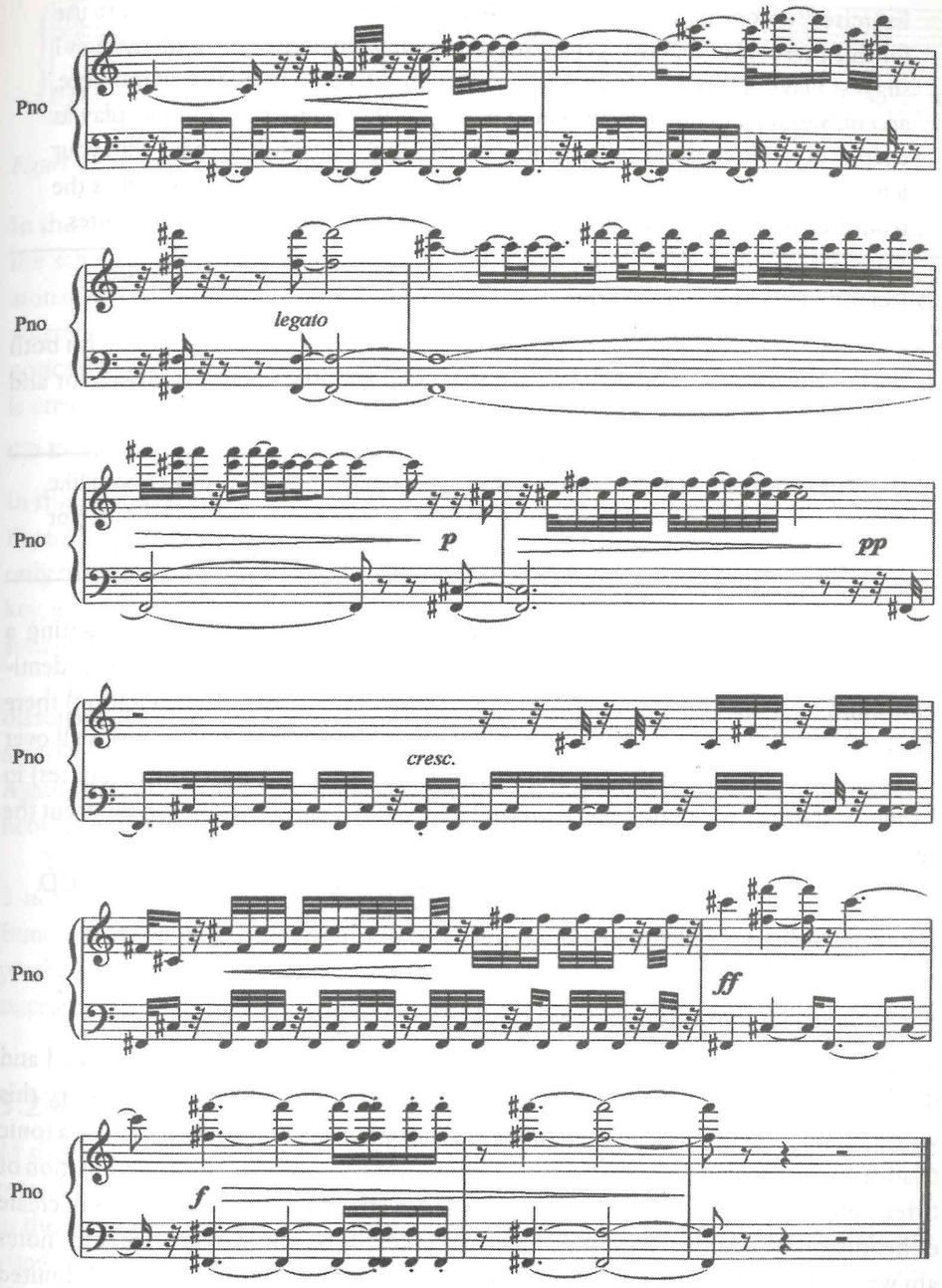


Figure 3.2: Example of 2-note improvisation



Exercise: Pick one note on the piano – for example E♭ (a black note is easier to use for this exercise) and play it gently without giving any pulse to it at all. At first I suggest playing this note anywhere you like on the piano with differing timbre, accent, sustain and duration, listening closely to the sound. For example, play as deep as possible on the keyboard and then very high. Establish a tempo with your left hand on E♭ below midle C and then start to play a rhythm that matches the tempo with your right hand. Bring it to a conclusion after about two minutes.

CD Example 1: 1-note improvisation

2-note improvisation develops the idea, and it is a good idea to experiment with both tonal intervals (for example 3rds, 4ths, 5ths, 6ths) and also the more dissonant and atonal intervals (2nds and 7ths).

Exercise: Choose two notes and use a play rule of playing them anywhere you like on the piano but only those two notes. Again, it is better to use black notes (for example F# and C#) because it is easier to be accurate when playing faster.

In the musical example given (Figure 3.2) I have tried to illustrate how exciting a 2-note improvisation can actually look. Setting the smallest note value at a demi-semi-quaver on the Sibelius notation system (as with the 1-note improvisation) there are periods of thick texture, even with two notes, when using those two notes all over the keyboard, and also moments of quite thin, sparse texture with pauses (spaces) in the music, indicating a more open texture. The score is meterd in common time, but the tied notes indicate that this is non-pulsed music.

There is an example of how to start this using a 5th/4th interval on the CD.

CD Example 2: 2-note improvisation

3-note improvisations

As soon as more than two notes are used, more complex harmony can be created and the suggestions of melody begin to emerge more strongly. It's a good idea to try this with a number of different combinations. To start with, it's important *not* to use a tonic triad either in the root position, first or second inversion. Instead, use a combination of three notes where either one can create a cadence effect or where the notes will create either dissonant or atonal harmony. Again the play rule here is to play these three notes anywhere on the keyboard in order to build up a creative improvisation with limited material.

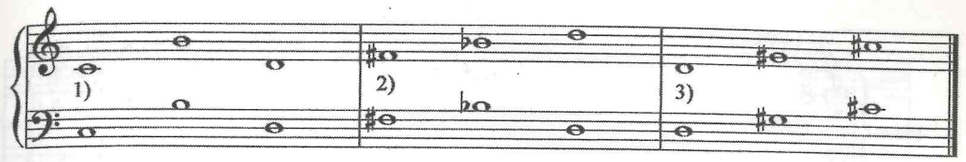


Figure 3.3: Example of not using tonic triads

In the 3-note improvisations it's important to remember not to play all three notes at the same time *all of the time.* Doing so will often create a consistently dissonant or atonal effect throughout and will prevent you from using the inherent harmonies where just two notes followed by two different notes are employed. This is particularly noticeable in the following example (CD3) where a cadence effect of dominant tonic is created.

CD Example 3: 3-note improvisation – cadence effect

In this 3-note improvisation, the cadence created is a perfect cadence where F (C and F) and the use of G (in combination with C) creates a dominant to tonic effect. Using only two notes of the selected three at any one time in the music can establish a sense of key, and cadence. This example also uses the G/F major second to establish some dissonance in the improvisation.

Figure 3.4 shows how these three notes in combination together create a dissonant effect (C#, G#, D). In fact when two alone are played (G# and C#) we have a perfect 5th. However, D in combination with either of these two notes is dissonant. Again, remember to use the notes in combinations of two as well as all three simultaneously.

The next example (Figure 3.5) provides an extremely dissonant/atonal effect of a 3-note improvisation, combining a minor 2nd (E and F) with a minor 7th (F and D#). Bunched together, these notes produce a very dissonant chord but placed apart they produce a more open feeling. It is important to incorporate all the other elements of staccato/legato, soft/loud, etc., to explore fully the improvisational possibilities.

3.2 Pulsed and non-pulsed playing

At this point, before going through any more musical techniques with notated or recorded examples, I want to introduce the very important aspect of pulse and tempo in the improvised music. Pulse plays a very significant and influential part in improvised music making. For a start, it can dominate and obstruct the creative process. Musicians and improvisers who are very 'pulse-bound' are noticeable, because some part of their body, typically a nodding head or a tapping foot, is often emphasizing the

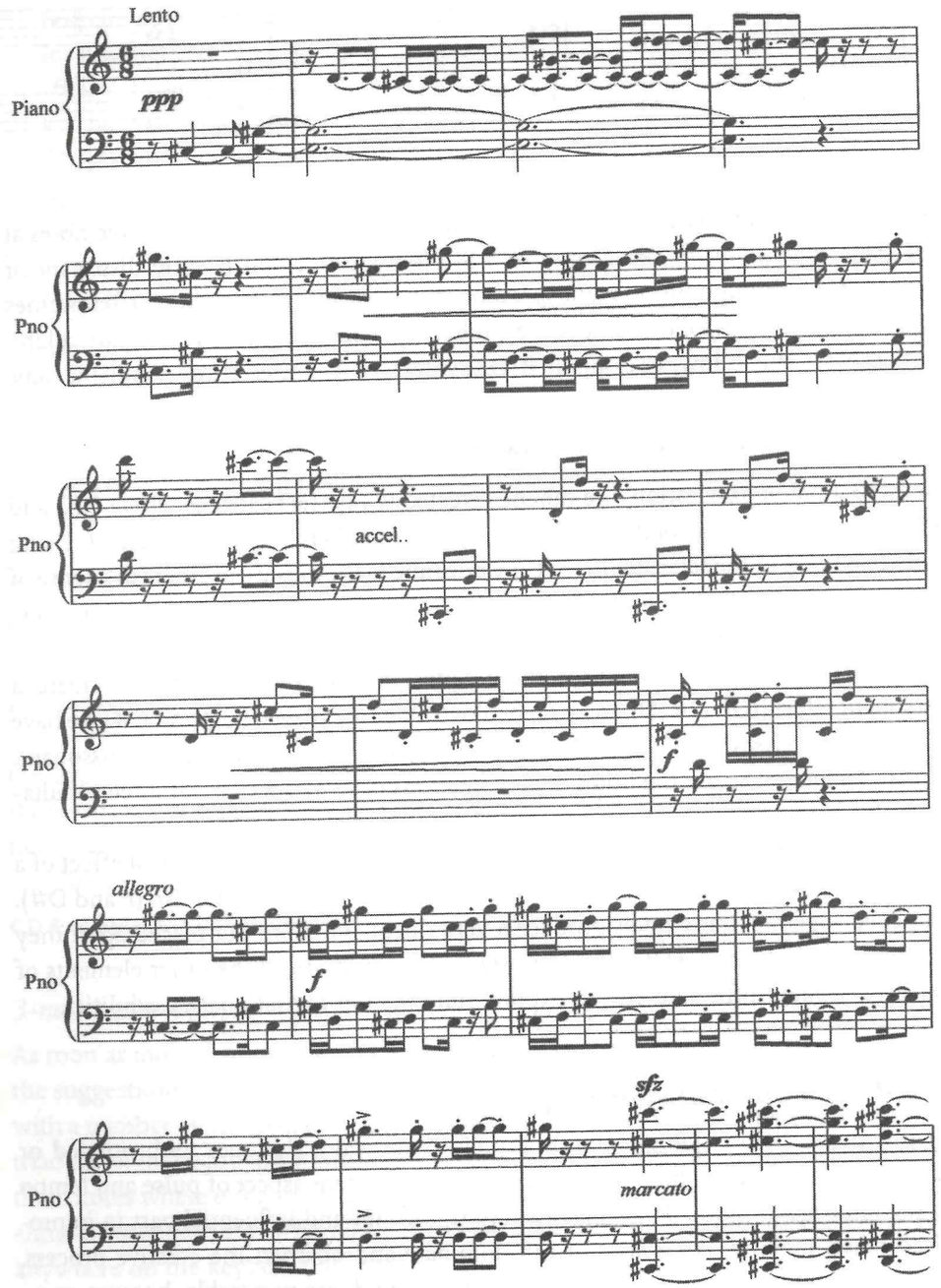
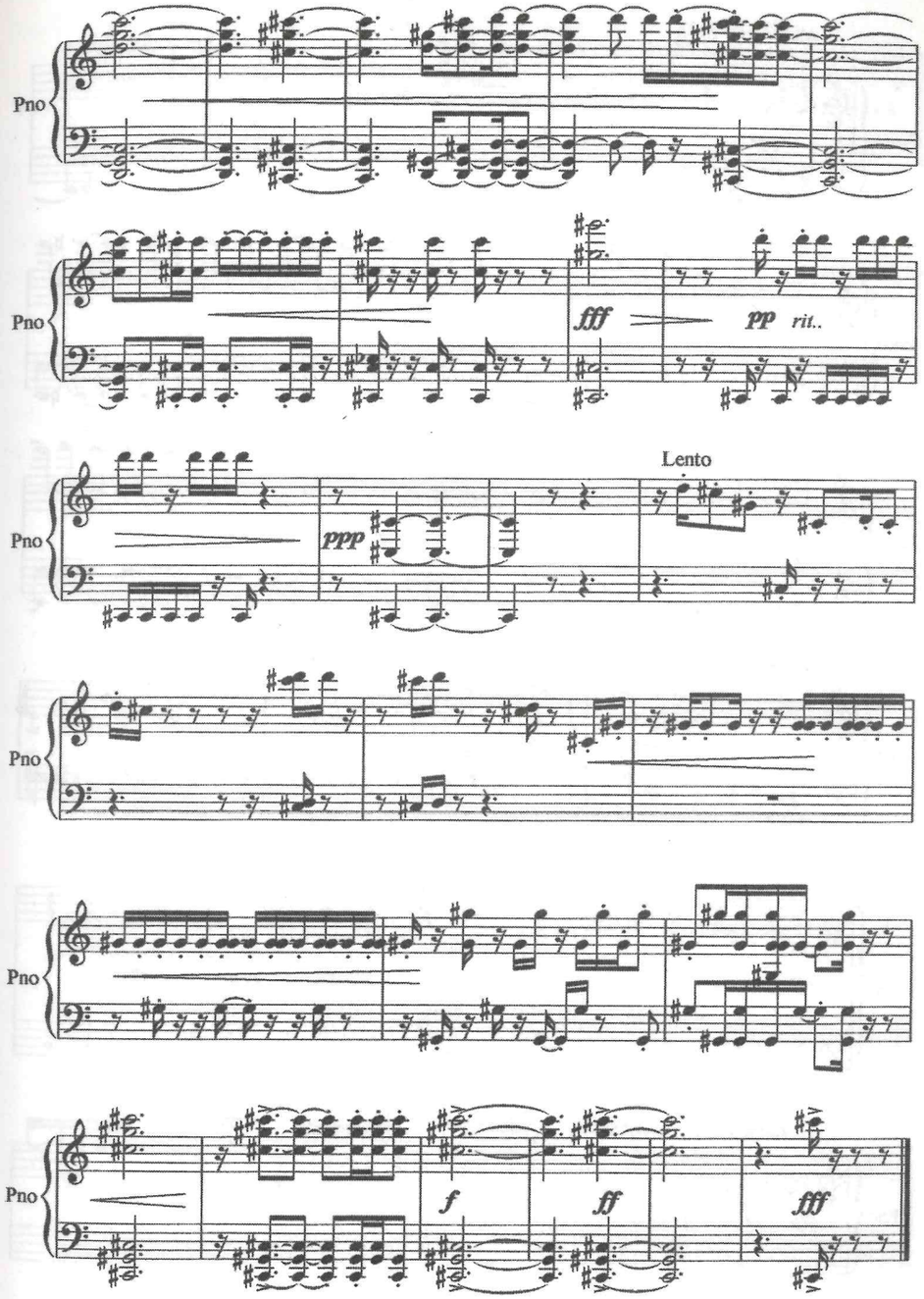


Figure 3.4: Example of 3-note improvisation (dissonant/atonal)



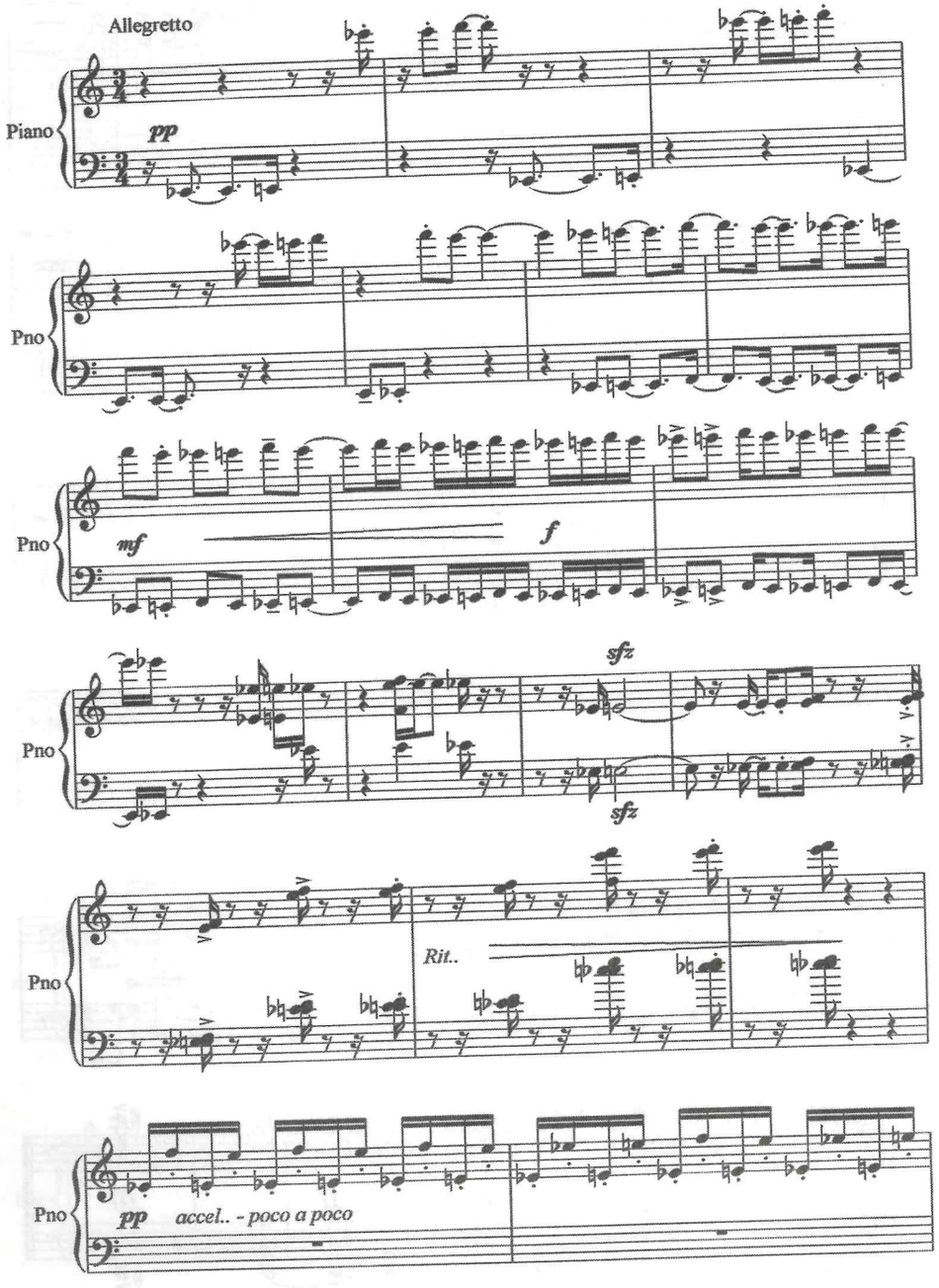
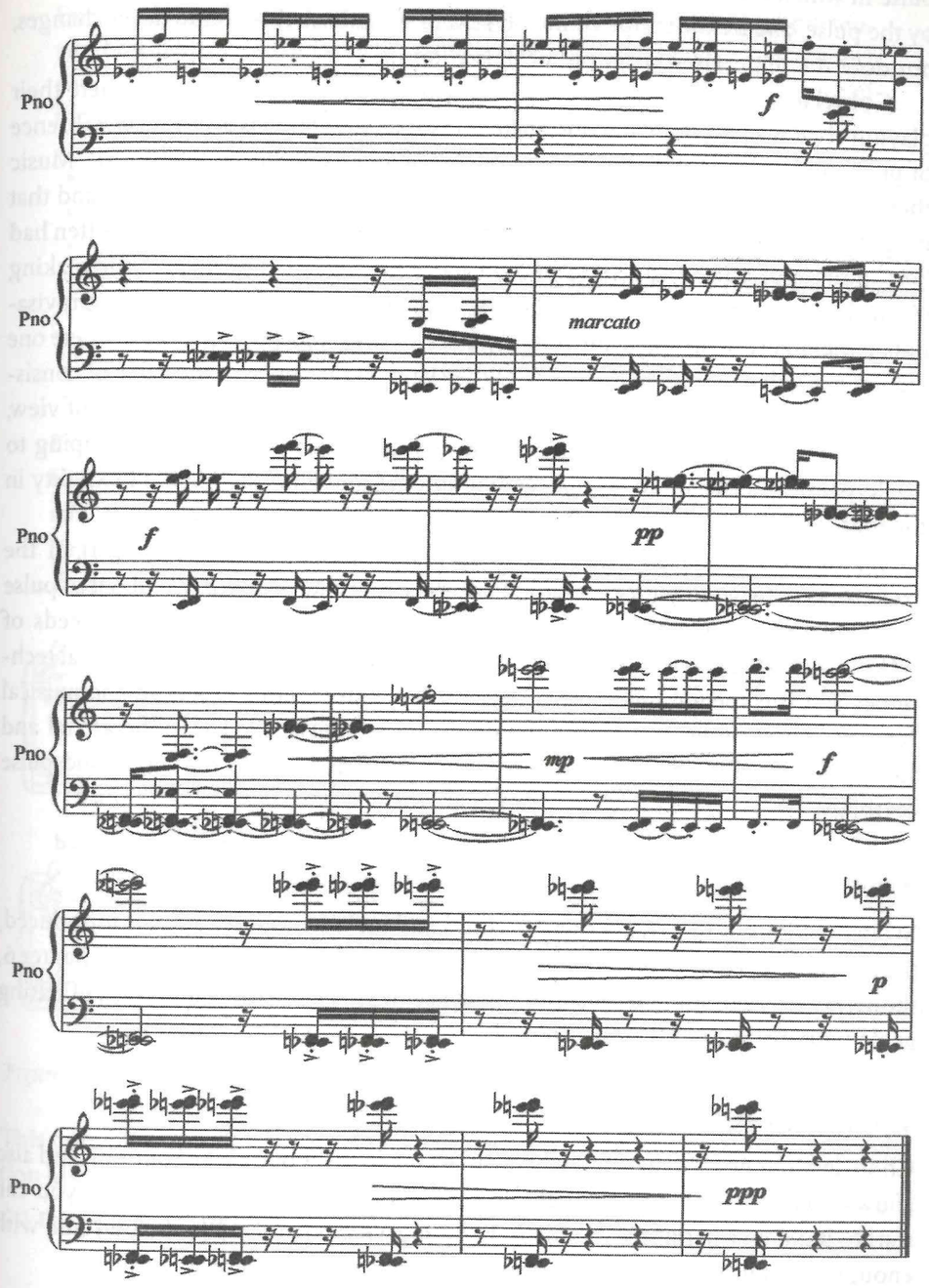


Figure 3.5: 3-note atonal improvisation – E, F, D#



pulse in which they are 'imprisoned'. The result is that the music becomes controlled by the pulse, and by the tempo of the pulse, and sometimes that tempo never changes, nor does the improviser break out of pulsed music.

Conversely, one can also experience playing together with someone where their playing style is so random, uncoordinated or vague that there is a significant absence of pulse, and consequently an absence of any sense of stability in their music. Music therapy pioneers argued that the pulse of music was akin to the pulse of life, and that people with disabilities, affective disorders, illnesses and mental disturbance often had 'lost' a sense of pulse and tempo in their daily life, reflected in their music making (Alvin 1975). Consequently it was the role of the music therapist, through improvisation, either to break up and disturb rigid pulses, or to establish a stable pulse where one did not exist, depending on the needs of the client. However, treat the value of consistent pulse and tempi with a degree of caution as, from a purely musical point of view, the driving force of a stable pulse can also prevent the improviser from stopping to think, pausing, slowing down or speeding up, and allowing there to be flexibility in the music.

In the next exercises, I recommend applying 'pulse…no pulse' as part of the exercise, so as to get into practice right from the beginning at going in and out of pulse in improvised music making. I also recommend working with different speeds of pulse, as well as abandoning pulse completely, in many of the following musical techniques and therapeutic methods to develop flexibility in this aspect of the musical dynamic. An example of a pulsed then non-pulsed music, CD3 uses the atonal and dissonant three notes from Figure 3.5 to demonstrate the need for tempo and pulse flexibility.

CD Example 4: 3-note improv: dissonant/atonal – including pulsed and non-pulsed sections

In later sections of this chapter where chord and melody improvisation is introduced, the non-pulsed 'recitative' style will be the starting point, and further on, in Chapter 6, the ability to make and use transitions will also demonstrate the importance of letting go of potentially rigid tempos and pulses.

4-note improvisations

Choosing four notes to play anywhere on the piano gives one a lot of options, and also allows greater harmonic potential and flexibility. With four specific notes, you can start to build up a harmonic foundation, placing a melody on top (or below) and, with enough variability in style and dynamic, create a complex piece of music.

Exercise: I would suggest using a variety of 4-note clusters, to develop both tonally-based, dissonant and atonal harmonic frames. Figure 3.6 gives four distinct and varied 4-note clusters to use for practice. Try an improvisation using each of these in turn, always remembering the following guidelines:

- Make sure there are sections where you just use two or three of the notes.
- Try using these four notes just as chords.
- Try using these four notes for melodic-rhythmic improvisation.
- Try using these notes as an ostinato, with a melodic improvisation above them.
- Try using two notes for a harmonic ground (i.e. C and G as a drone) and improvise melody above them.
- Make sure you play with and without a pulse for periods of time.

Explore the harmonic possibilities in each case, and notice both the logical harmonic modulations (i.e. in Fig.6, Example 4, going from E♭ major to C minor) – relative major to relative minor) and the inharmonic modulations (Fig.6, Example 1, going from D minor or major to E♭ minor or major).

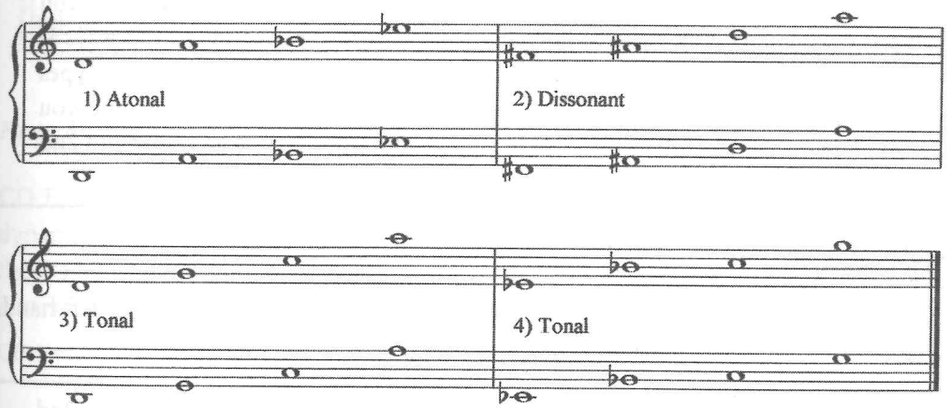


Figure 3.6: 4-note tonal and atonal improvisation examples

This next CD example gives a demonstration of the use of four notes in an improvisation also employing the presence and absence of meter.

CD Example 5: 4-note improvisation with variability of meter.

3.3 Chordal improvisation

Improvising on a favourite chord or key is another good way of limiting the material in order to practise creative improvisation. The effects of keys can be very different: for example it is often commented that A major is a bright, cheerful sound while G♭ major creates a more mellow, soft effect. Consequently, composers have used different keys in their works with this effect in mind, and the bright gay quality of Mozart's A major Piano Concerto K488 is very clear when contrasted, for example, with the Beethoven Piano Sonata 26 in A♭ major. Beethoven used keys in a very special way in his only opera, *Fidelio*, to represent themes such as triumph, despair or freedom in the music. An example of chordal improvisation is demonstrated on CD6, which also introduces what I will call 'shimmer effects' and arpeggio/broken chord effects. They can also be used as accompanying motifs, and will be discussed in 3.10.

CD Example 6: Chord improvisation G♭ major

Exercise: Using this concept, choose different keys to practise creating different feelings. Choose a tonic triad chord – for example G♭ major – and use only these notes in the improvisation. Do not use the scale of the key, just the chord notes wherever they are on the piano (G♭, B♭, D♭). Practise creating rhythmic, pulsed improvisation contrasting with non-pulsed improvisation and ensure that you practise using the full range of the piano in as many different and creative ways as you can. This idea is very useful in clinical work where one wants to provide types of accompaniment which will be explained in a later section. Make sure you explore the chord in all its different positions: root position, 1st inversion and 2nd inversion.

'Shimmer' effect

This is really a fast, rocking 3rd/4th in the right hand with the same in the left hand. Played softly and very fast, it creates a special effect.

Exercise: Try it using two different chords, first creating a shimmer in F major 2nd inversion and then changing to A major 1st inversion, beginning high up in the piano, and then moving down. At first, try this exercise for a short time to avoid cramp. Maintaining a relaxed wrist and fingers will help avoid cramp that comes from overtension. This exercise is notated in the first four bars of figure 3.7. When moving to the A major 1st inversion chord the rocking transfers easily by using the same fingers and changing only two notes in both hands. From bars 5–9, further modulations extend the idea.

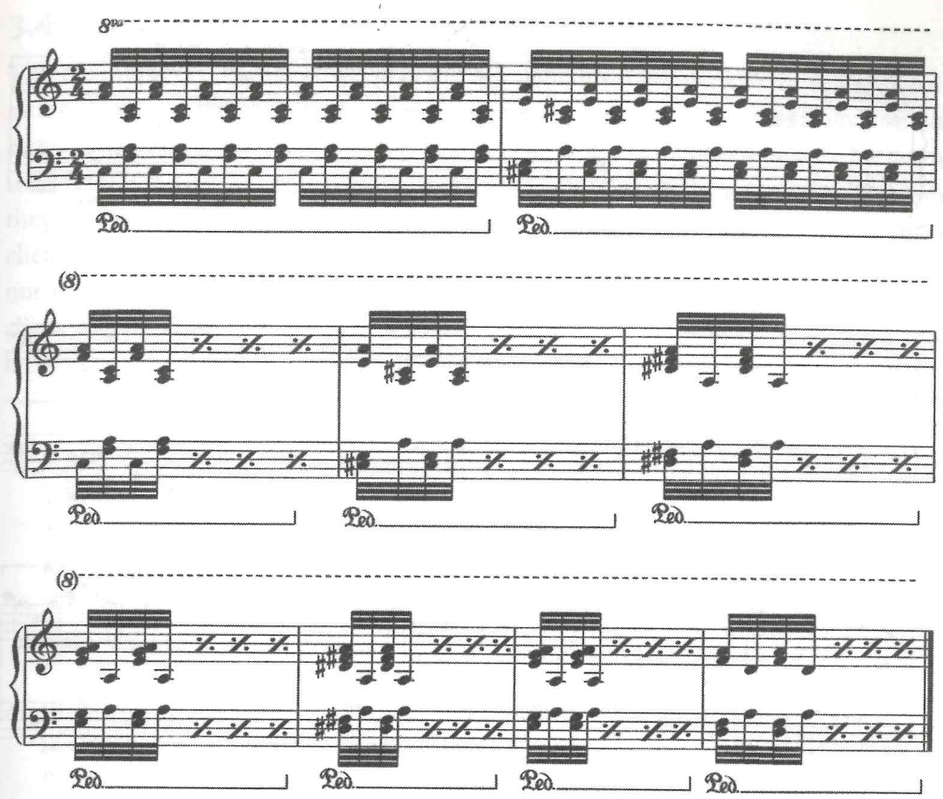


Figure 3.7: Shimmer effect using F major 2nd inversion to A major 1st inversion

CD Example 7 gives a demonstration of the shimmer effect, also using variation in dynamic and, towards the end, the position of the shimmer chords in the register of the piano. The example begins with just F major 2nd inversion going to A major 1st inversion, but then extends to other chords using the same effect.

CD Example 7: Shimmer effect

Arpeggio/broken chord effect

This is altogether less 'painful' than the shimmer effect! Find another chord you like, and explore both with pulsed and with non-pulsed music arpeggios and broken chords. Again, it can be easier to do this on the black keys for greater accuracy at faster speeds.

The example on CD8 uses E♭ minor because it is just black notes and can allow greater accuracy, But it goes on to develop through other keys to give an illustration of how this works.

CD Example 8: Arpeggio solidus broken chord E♭ minor

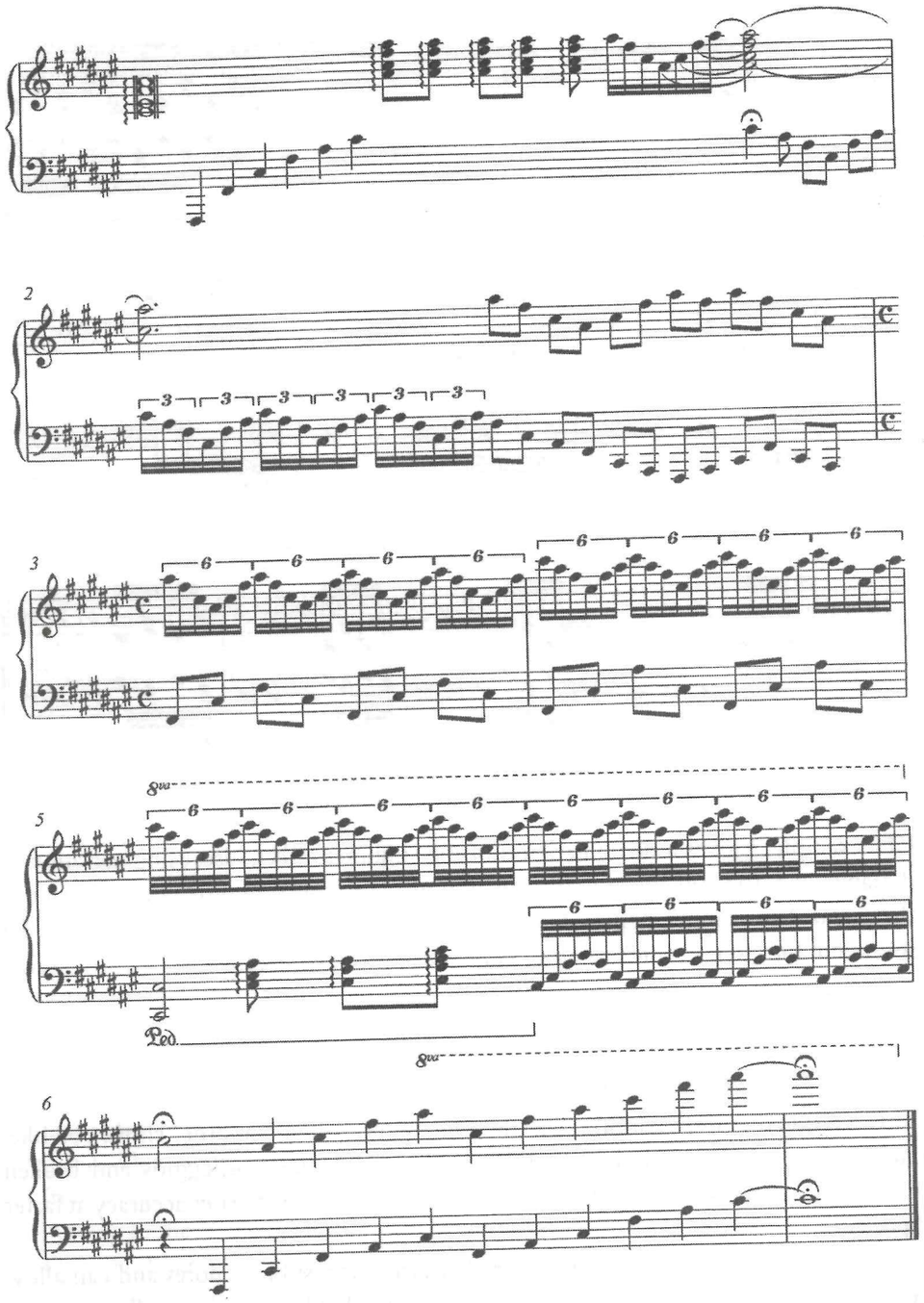


Figure 3.8: Arpeggio/broken chord effect

3.4 Melodic improvisation – melodic dialogues

This technique is designed to develop the spontaneous creation of melody in improvisation. Good melodies have certain essential components. Quite often they contain some direction to the melody, repeated phrases and even some sense of harmony within the melody. In clinical work, clients present who create melody, but the way they play might represent aspects of their own pathological problem. For example, a client will create a melody which has no sense of direction and which just rambles from one note to another without any sense of phrasing or structure. Another example is a client who jumps from one note to another with no sense of step-wise motion, or who lacks a melodic frame that provides any sense of stability or consistency.

Exercise: To develop skills in melodic improvisation, first of all practise creating a melody that has a simple harmonic idea within a tonal frame, and with some repeated patterns in it. Select a key, such as D minor, and start improvising a simple melodic idea with your right hand. Practise repeating phrases, make sure there is some sense of harmonic direction in the music (for example, going to the dominant and then returning to the tonic) and at first develop a predictable direction in the melody.

Figure 3.9 gives an example of a simple melody improvisation using some predictable and logical melodic sequences, so that the melody demonstrates a sense of direction and coherence. I have excluded any harmony from this, and left the meter rather ambiguous. At this point, I am trying to exemplify the idea of working purely with melodic patterns.

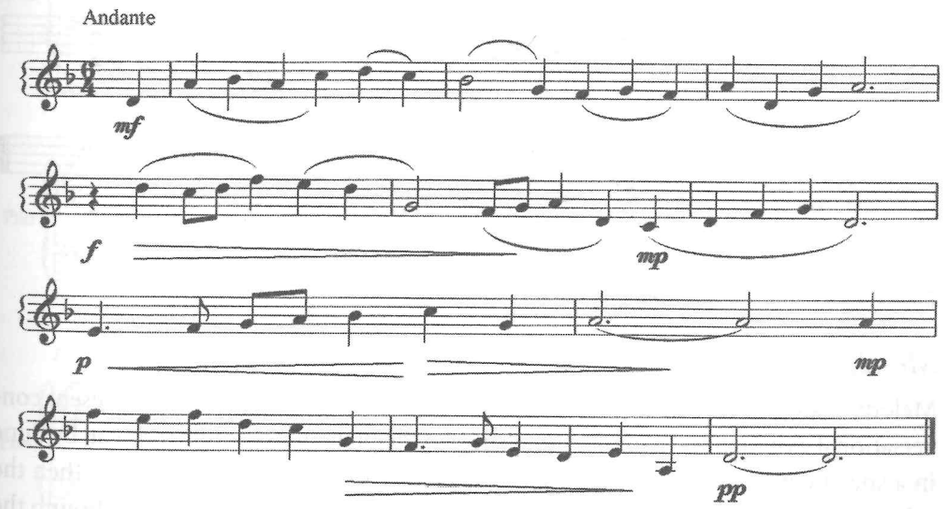


Figure 3.9: Melody improvisation in D minor

Exercise: Left-hand melody. The left hand frequently gets relegated to a very stereotyped role, and improvisational skill using the left hand to make melody is also valuable. This time don't play in a specific key, but develop an atonal melody in your left hand. While atonal melodies may feel freer than tonal ones, where there are some expectations in the implied harmonic structure and direction of the melody, they can also sound chaotic and directionless, unless some repeated phrases, figures and patterns are included to give the melody a sense of structure and coherence (perhaps even occasional predictability). To add variation to the exercise, try playing alternatively legato and staccato, i.e. in a pulsed, 4/4 rhythm, do 4 bars legato and 4 bars staccato. Figure 3.10 gives an example of an atonal melody in the left hand.

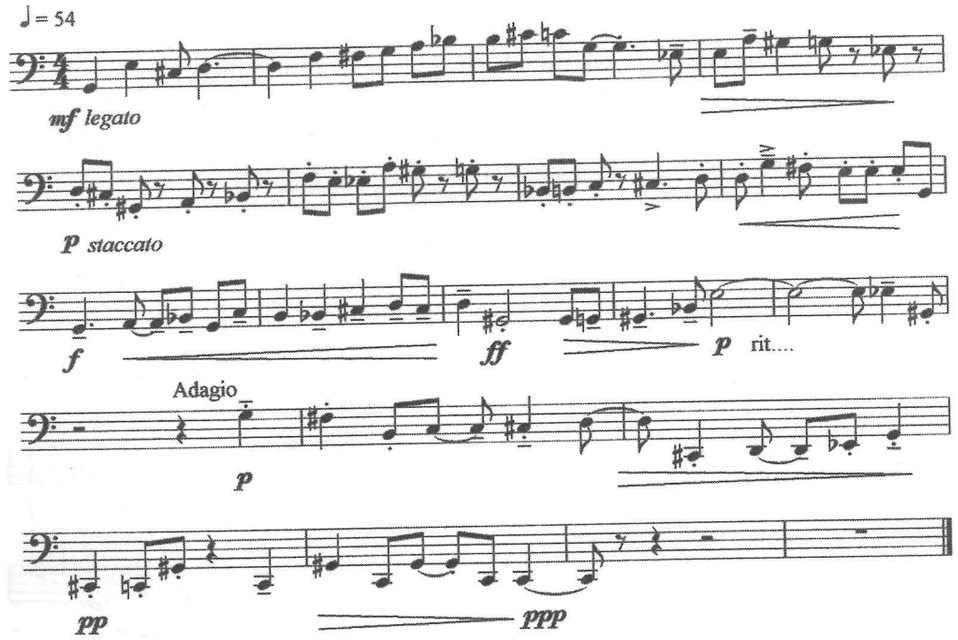


Figure 3.10: Atonal melody improvisation – left hand

Melody dialogues

Melody dialogues can be very useful in therapy interaction as they can represent conversational experiences in music. Practising on the piano with both hands can be done in a specific way where one hand plays while the other hand holds a note, then the other hand takes over the melody while the first hand holds a note. Hence though the

hands are not playing simultaneously to start with, the music resembles a conversational dialogue between the two hands. Be sure that the phrases do not completely match (by using variation in phrase length) and that some staccato, volume, tempo changes and other variations can creep in.

Figure 3.11 gives an example of melody dialogue, and as a further exercise try using this example as a starting point, extending the improvised dialogue in this style. Note that the melody is rather predictable, tonal, with step-wise and small interval movement, stable rhythm and pulse, and no major dynamic variations.

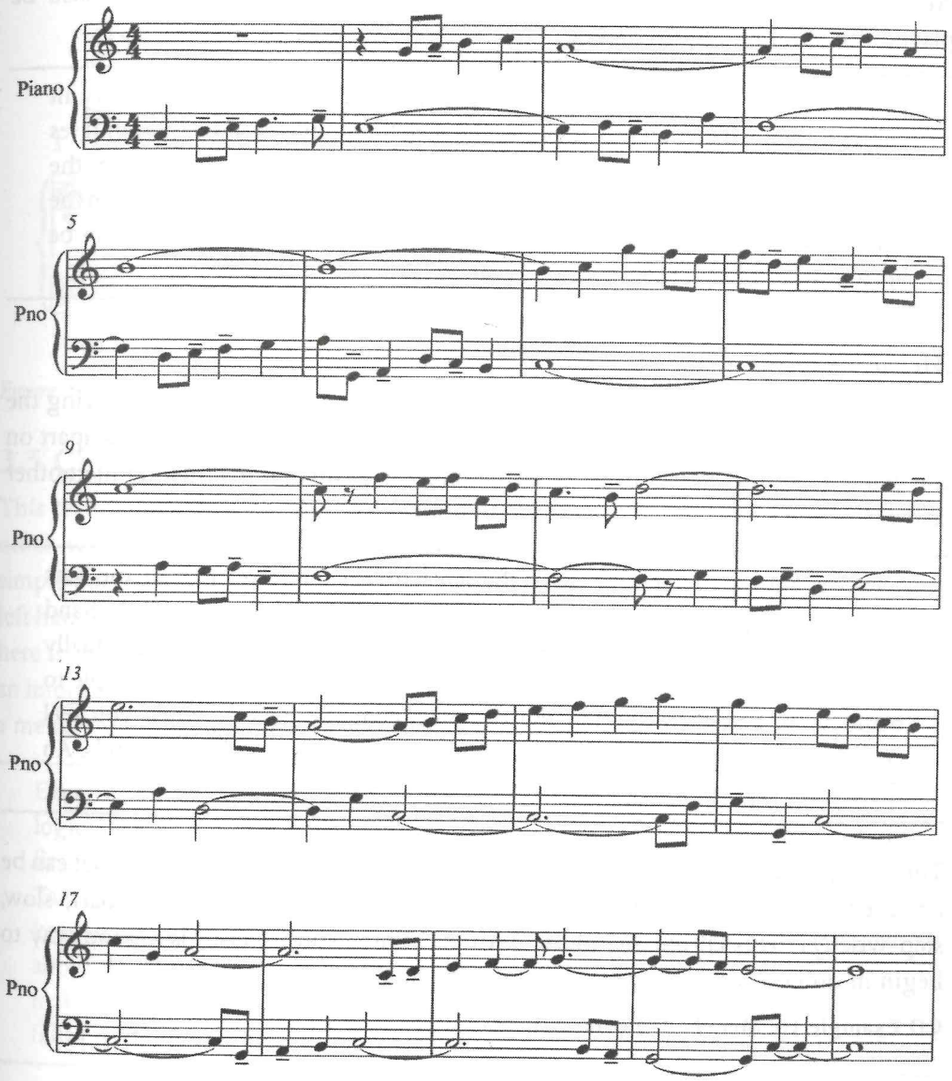


Figure 3.11: Tonal and modal melody dialogue

CD9 gives a demonstration of a melody dialogue, beginning in F major and then modulating, using melody fragments, extending the ideas and using sequences.

CD Example 9: Tonal melody dialogue improvisation

Initially, it is suitable to develop a melody dialogue without the complications of having to remember key signatures (sharps and flats), so using A minor or C major is a good starting point, if one is aiming for atonal and harmonic idea. The main purpose here is to develop a balanced dialogue between two hands and to develop one's skill at creating matching phrases and answering phrases. Matching phrases can also be played (for variation) in inversion.

Exercise: Practise different types of dialogues on their own at first and then try an improvisation where you mix together the matching phrases, answering phrases and mirroring or inverting phrases between hands. Also remember to vary the phrase lengths in the right hand/left hand dialogue. Start to include accents in the music, and the dialogue will start to sound more like a conversation (as can be heard in CD Example 9).

Melody doubling

An interesting idea, often used in films to create a certain atmosphere, is playing the same melody phrases in both hands simultaneously but four to five octaves apart on the piano. I call this *melody doubling* as the effect is of doubling a melody in another register.

Exercise: Start a simple melody in the left hand in the lower half of the bass section of the piano and play the same melody simultaneously in the right hand high up near the top range of the piano. Try it slowly and softly at first, gradually introducing dynamic, rhythm and tempo to the improvisation. Keep it simple to begin with, and then develop the complexity of the melody when you feel confident that you can play the same thing simultaneously with both hands. An illustration is given in Figure 3.12.

The example on the CD (CD10) gives a demonstration of the type of effect that can be achieved with melody doubling. When playing with both hands far apart, slow, step-wise (perhaps chromatic) music with occasional short pauses is a good way to begin in order to achieve accuracy in melody doubling.

CD Example 10: Melody 4–5 octaves apart

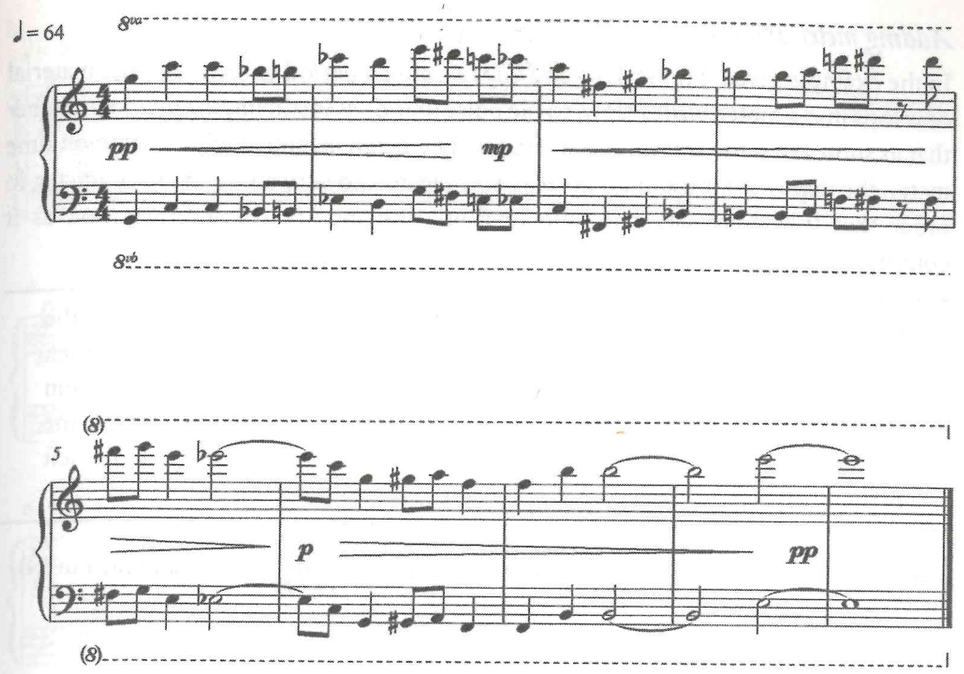


Figure 3.12: 4–5 octave apart melody – special effect

3.5 Chord and melody improvisation

This technique is based on a combination of chords in one hand and melody in the other, which so typically provides a musical frame for songs or pieces. To establish a simple and straightforward foundation begin with a two-chord improvisation in the left hand. Use a 'recitative' style in order to avoid getting stuck in a pulse. The objective here is to establish a two-chord frame (in either the left hand or the right hand), with an improvised melody in the opposite hand without a pulse, where the development of a melody within a tonal frame is practised.

Exercise: Figure 3.13 provides a sequence of tonal chords which lead through a logical modulatory sequence. For this exercise use the first two chords only, at first, to provide the harmonic ground for the chord and melody improvisation. Take these first two chords and work out a diatonic improvisation on the white keys of the piano alone (as demonstrated in Figure 3.13) improvising a melody above the chords. When using the 'recitative' style of improvising, the trick is to make sure that when you change the chord the harmony of the melody logically falls on the right note at the point of change.

Adding meter and pulse

In the example given (Figure 3.13 and CD11), after a period of recitative, the material develops into a meter, with a slow, stable pulse (bar 8). It is still important to remember that as soon as a pulse is introduced, especially when it is framed with a common time meter, the improvisation should initially stay legato and very moderato in character, in order that the improviser has time to think and modify the improvisation as it continues.

Exercise: At first, practise the recitative style illustrated on the CD and in the music. Subsequently, establishing a simple 4-4 pulse on the chords and then improvising the melody to those chords is a good way to develop the idea within tempo. Subsequently (CD 11), switching the chords to the right hand while the left hand has to produce the melody is a good challenge for your right brain/left brain flexibility!

CD Example 11: Two chord improvisation – recitative (chords in right hand then in left hand)

3.6 Dissonant improvisation

Dissonance is described generally as a discordant combination of sounds, and musically is a style that is founded in tonality, but includes certain intervals (seconds, sevenths, diminished and augmented intervals) that give the chords and harmony a dissonant quality. *Dissonant music* is also characterized by incongruence or discrepancy in the musical harmony (Collins English Dictionary 1993). In order clarify differences at this stage, *atonal music* is defined as music that has no established key, whereas *dissonant music* has a sense of key, and a harmonic framework. *Tonal music* is music that is defined as having or relating to tone: utilizing the diatonic system and having an established key.

In clinical music therapy, it is often relevant and empathic to create a dissonant frame to a client's music to reflect certain aspects of the feelings that might be underpinning or underlying the expressive communication within the music. Harmonically tonal music may not be effective empathically with the client's disturbed or upset feelings and dissonance can serve a very useful function in the same way as atonal music can break free of any types of harmonic or structured rules. Dissonance is useful where a client is perhaps playing random melodic material either on a piano, xylophone or another type of melodic instrument, and the therapist can create a dissonant harmonic frame for the client's music.

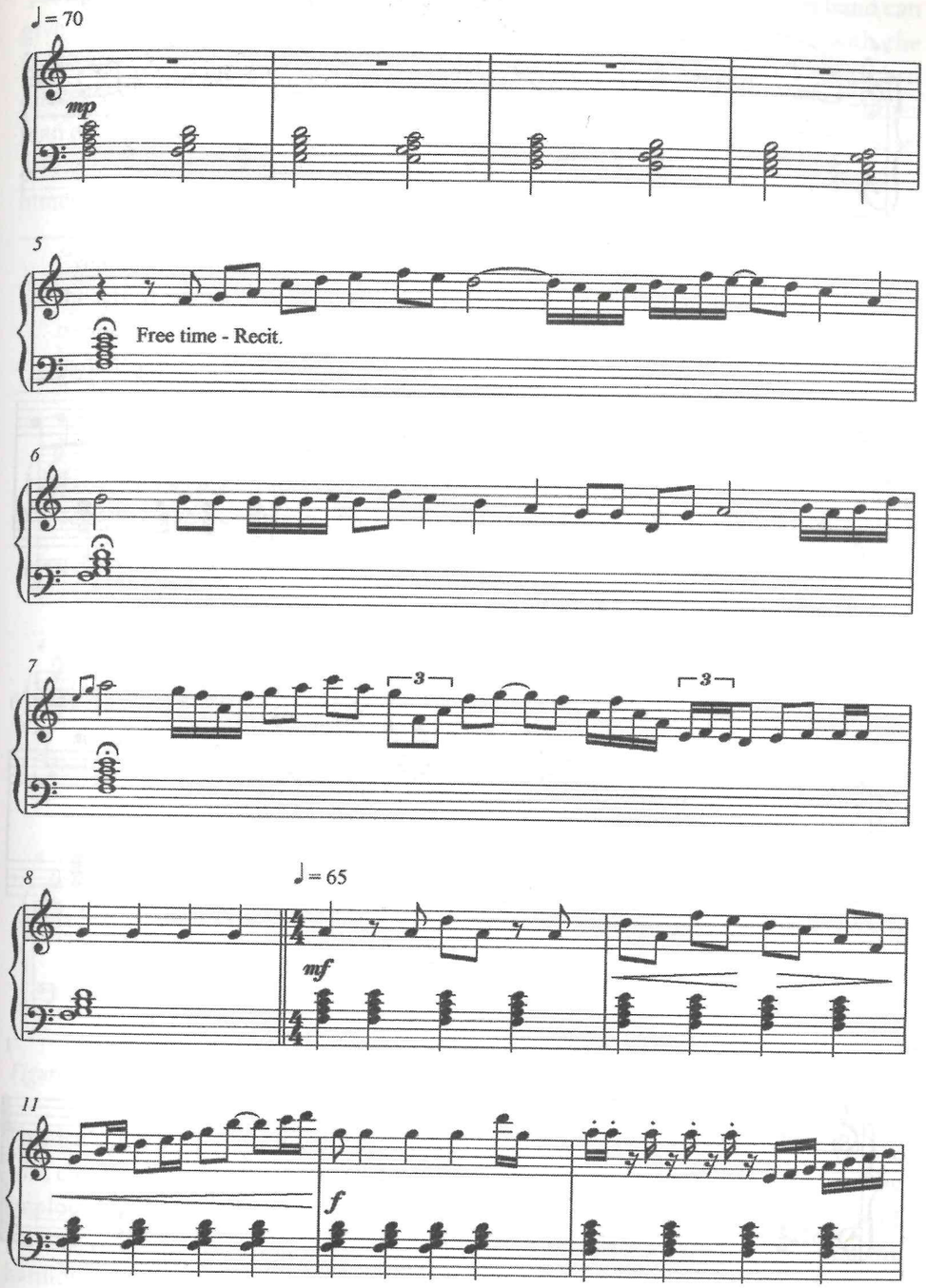


Figure 3.13: Two-chord improvisation (F7 to G7) Recitative leading to meter, continued on next page

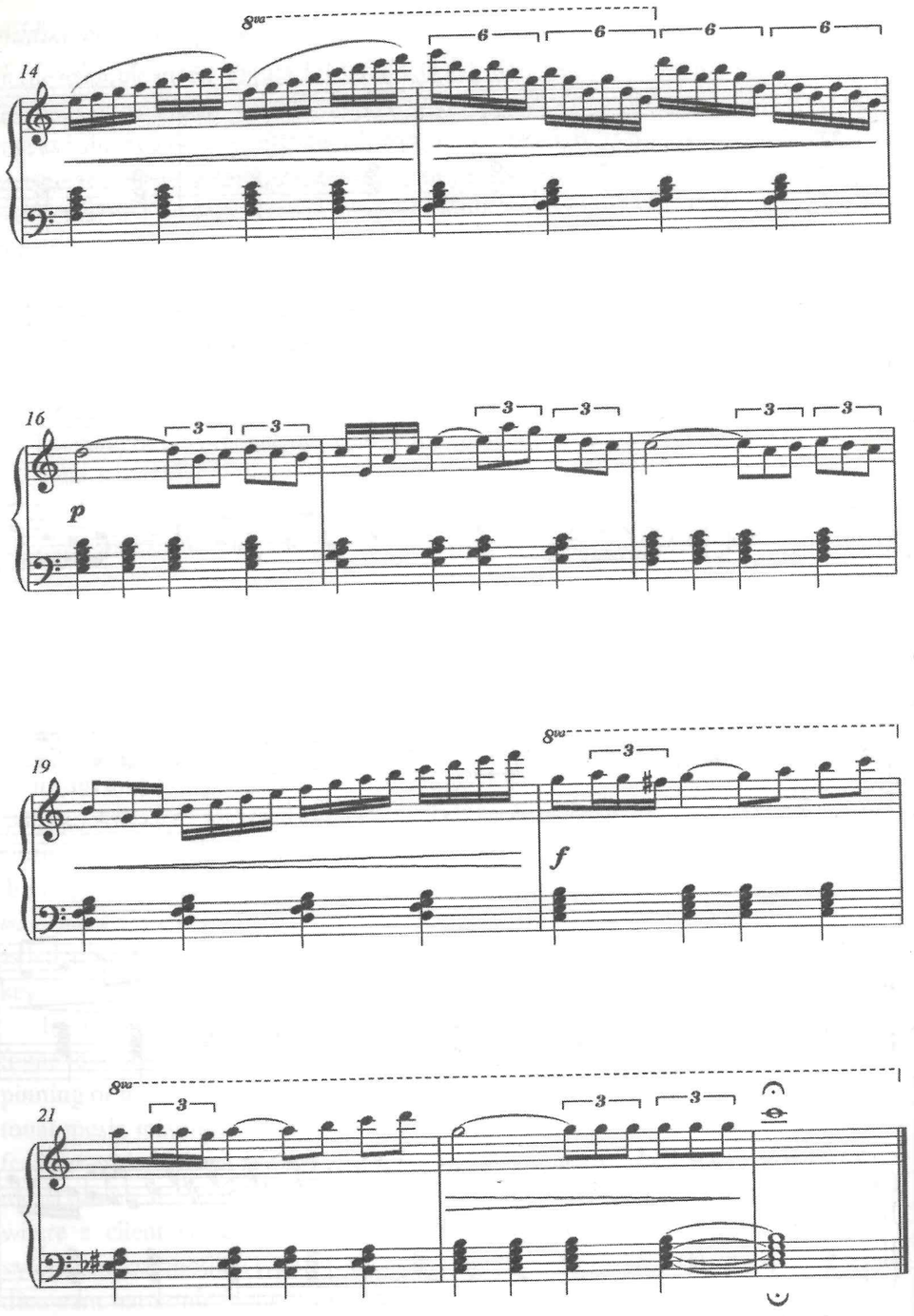


Figure 3.13: Two-chord improvisation (F7 to G7) Recitative leading to meter, continued

Figure 14 offers a technique for practising this using the piano. The left hand can give a dissonant harmonic frame that is basically grounded in C major with the augmented fourth included in the chord. Melody can then be improvised above it in a different key, such as E major or D major. This juxtaposition of one key upon another is an effective way to achieve a dissonant effect within a conventional harmonic frame. A fine example to practise is playing a song or a piece using one key for the accompaniment and another key for the melody.

Exercise: Practise playing 'Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star' in C major harmony on the left hand, while playing the tune in C sharp major on right hand! Once you have mastered how it goes, try placing the melody two octaves higher than the harmony!

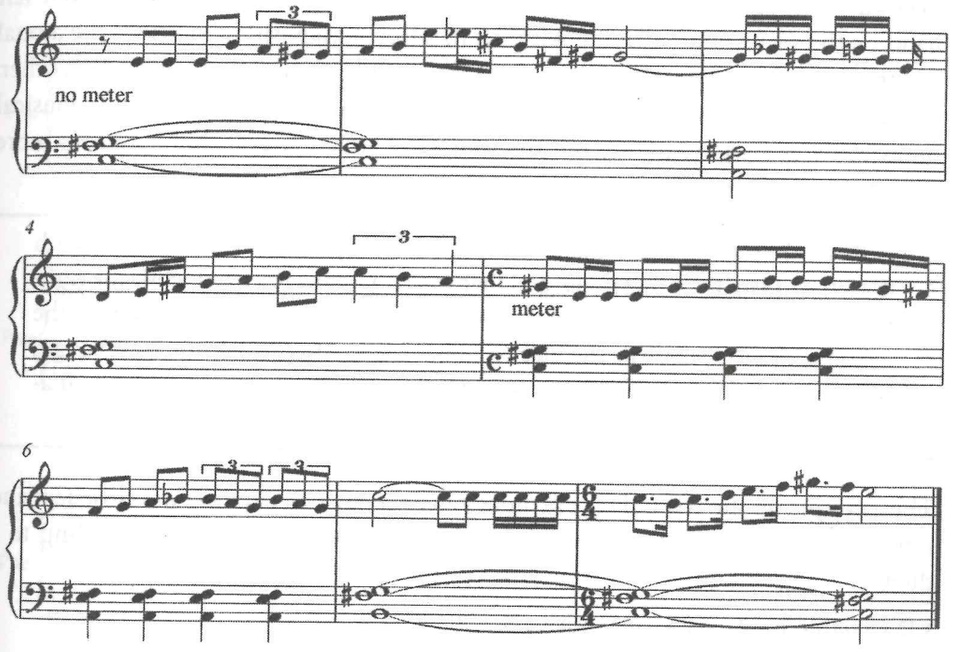


Figure 3.14: Dissonant harmonic-melodic music

This isn't just for fun, as it creates an interesting dynamic, especially when working with children who can be amused and intrigued by hearing tunes that are distorted by employing dissonance in this way. So the easiest way to develop a dissonant style of playing is by taking a harmonic frame and then adding dissonant intervals into the harmonic frame such as seconds, sevenths and augmented fourths.

3.7 Atonal melodic dialogue improvisation

As I described earlier, atonal improvisation is where no particular key is specified and the music appears to be totally ungrounded harmonically. There still needs to be some stability in the melodic style, with repeated ideas, motifs, phrases and rhythmic patterns. Atonal music can be experienced as a chaotic and even frightening medium by some, while others find it a free and creative style of play. This is essentially its value as a therapeutic tool, offering an opportunity for musical participation to all where musical skill and knowledge is not a prerequisite, and where the musical relationship can be an equal-term relationship. It offers the opportunity to explore and balance structure and freedom in music therapy treatment, which has been a theme of mine in previous articles (Wigram 1995b, 2002a).

A simple way of beginning an atonal style of improvisation is through melodic dialogue, only this time play with your right hand on the black notes and your left hand on the white notes. Playing with the hands in juxtaposition increases the atonal feel to the music, and develops a feeling of the melodies intertwining with each other. When the hands are further apart, one's sense of harmonic structure in the musical brain tends to start separating out the tonal and atonal effects, and it sounds more dissonant than atonal.

> Exercise: To start an atonal melody dialogue, begin playing melody phrases with the left hand on the white notes, and then pause with the left hand while the right hand joins in on the black notes. Use plenty of seconds and sevenths in the melodic idea to accentuate the idea of atonal music. After two or three exchanges of phrases, practise in juxtaposition, and then play with both hands simultaneously to develop the dialogue into a duet.

The example on the CD (CD12) demonstrates the idea, illustrating the closeness and intertwined effect of right hand-left hand interaction in this dialogue leading to a duet.

CD Example 12: Atonal melody dialogue

Figure 3.15: Atonal melody dialogue improvisation

3.8 Playing in 6ths and 3rds, tonic triads, 1st and 2nd inversions

Tonal structure can be very supportive, grounding, stabilizing and structuring in improvisation. Simple techniques that are easily mastered but produce quite a complex effect are valuable tools in therapy. This section explains how to apply a technique

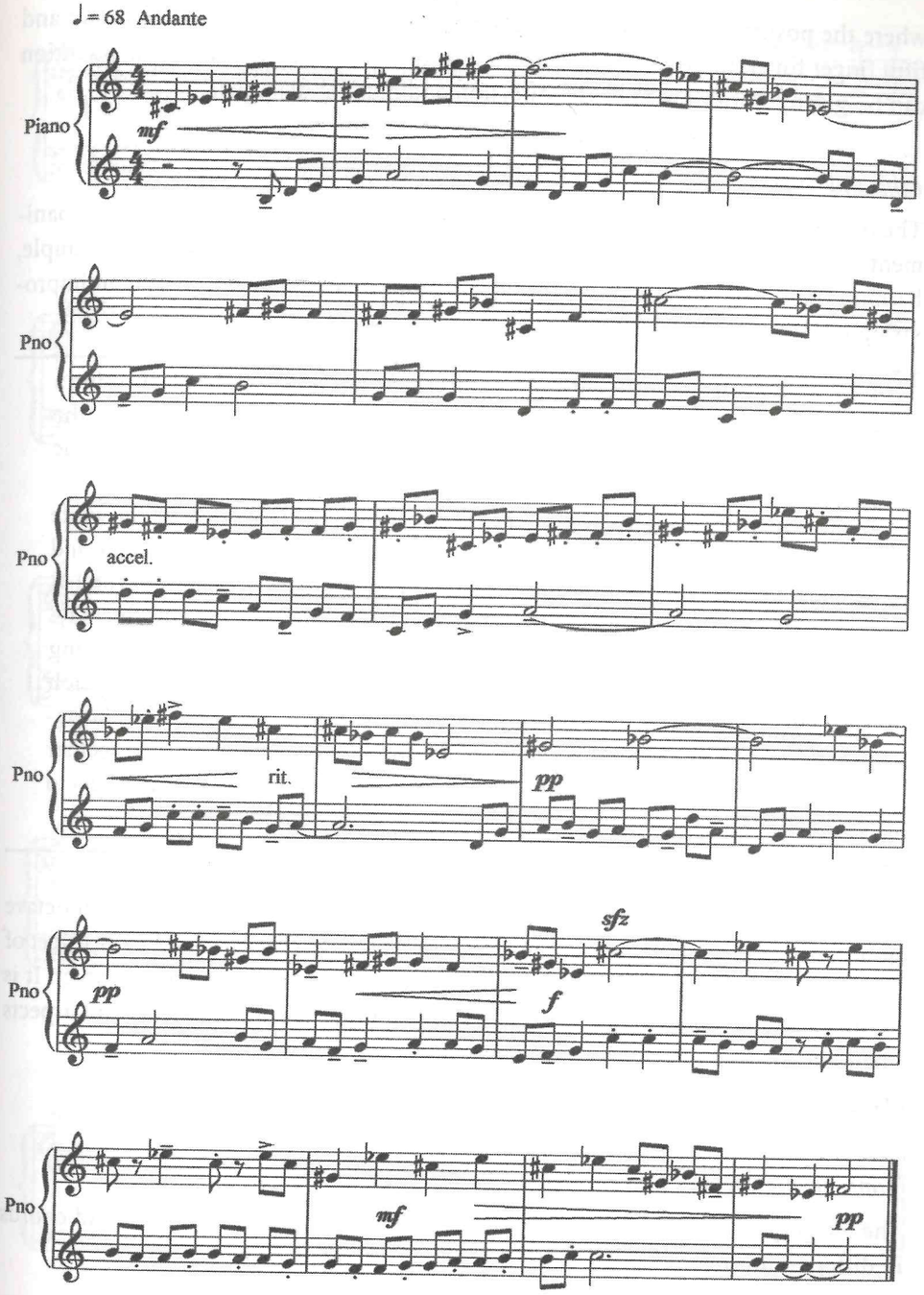


Figure 3.15: Atonal melody dialogue improvisation

where the position and distance between fingers in the right hand using thumb and fifth finger for sixths, and thumb and third finger for fourths is 'fixed', and attention can be given to phrasing, melodic direction and musical dialogue.

6ths and 3rds

The first technique to develop, using the piano, for giving a tonal melodic accompaniment or support to a client's music is the use of 6ths or 3rds on the piano. It is a simple, harmonic and also melodic way to provide a supportive framework to a client improvising on percussion or instruments or xylophones and metallophones.

Exercise: Establish a tonal centre or a tonal ground in the bass of the piano, using a repetitive pattern of three octaves. For a ground in the major (again using just the white notes of the piano) C-F-G…C-F-G in slow octaves provides the harmonic ground. For the relative minor, use A-D-E…A-D-E.

In the right hand start to play using just the interval of the 6th, solely on the white notes and using a step-wise direction in the melody line, to create a melodic and harmonic effect. It's useful if the moment when the octave changes in the left hand matches in a harmonically (modulatory) congruent way with the 'melody' that is being improvised using 6ths in the right hand. Develop this further using 3rds in the right hand, and by extending the left hand octave improvisation beyond a tonic, dominant subdominant sequence. Figure 3.16 gives an illustration of this technique, bringing in triplet rhythms in the melody which, together with the effects of 6ths and 3rds, gives a gentle, Mexican/Latin American feel to the music.

CD Example 13 gives a demonstration of moving in 6ths and 3rds, using an octave ground bass. This is also an example of the use of rubato in music, where the effect of slowing and stretching the music perhaps provides a wistful, sentimental effect. It is another example of the importance of including other musical elements and aspects when employing a specific musical technique.

CD Example 13: 6ths and 3rds improvisation

Tonic triads, 1st and 2nd inversions

The technique of 6ths and 3rds described above can be developed using triad chords in different inversions.

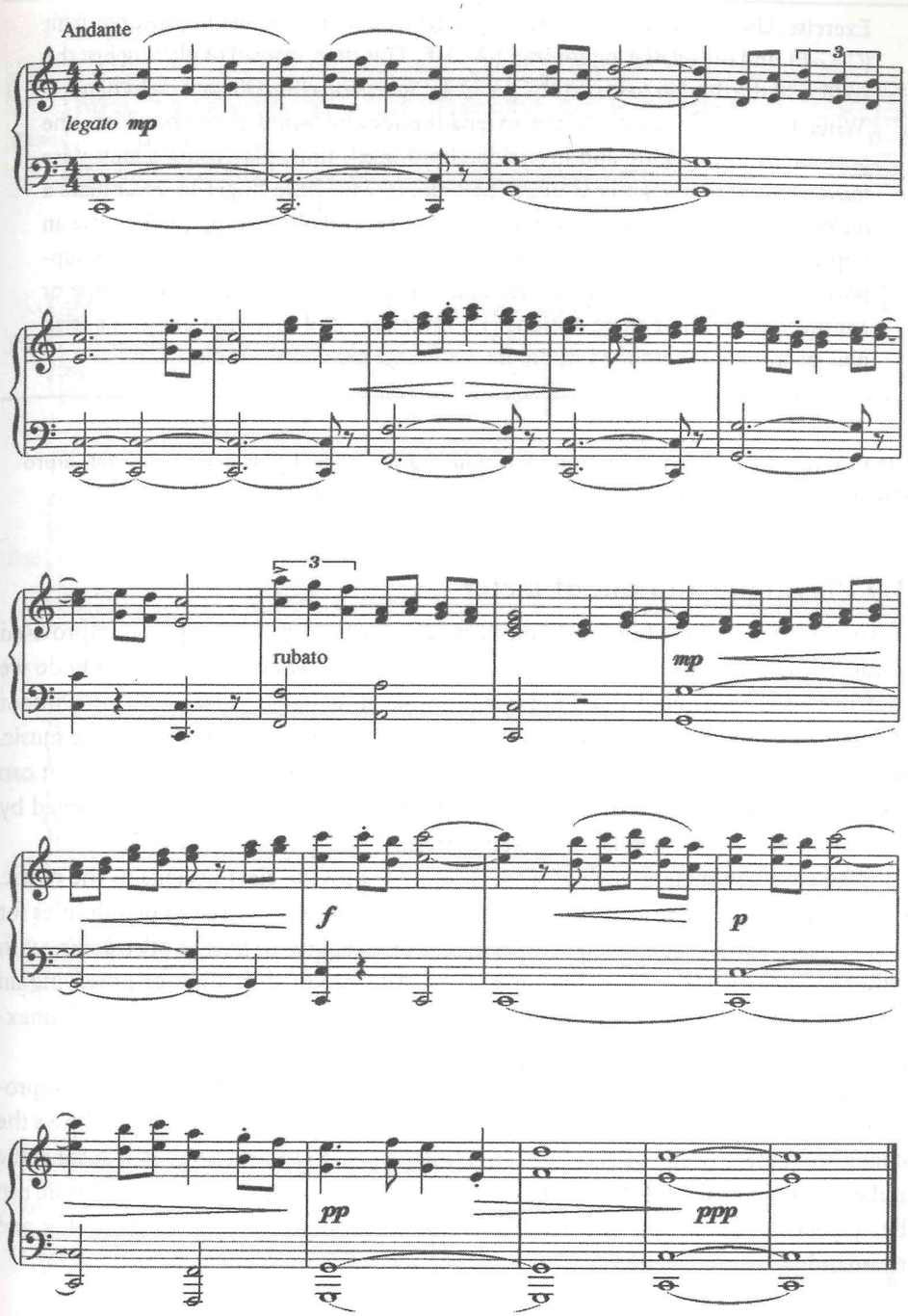


Figure 3.16: 6ths and 3rds improvisation with tonal bass

Exercise: Use the same bass idea of three octaves, tonic, dominant, sub-dominant (C-G-F), and the relative minor using A-D-E. This time, instead of playing just the sixth, add the third in to form the 6/3, or 1st inversion chord in your right hand.

When this has become confident, extend this idea by forming your hand into the position of the 6/4, or 2nd inversion chord. Each time, play using a step-wise movement, with a slightly stronger pressure in your little finger to accentuate a melody. Finally, try using the whole tonic triad chord plus the octave. Practise an improvisation using these chords. It's very good for accompanying and supporting playing where a client is randomly playing melodies on a xylophone or another piano. These three options (1st inversion, 2nd inversion and tonic triad plus octave are exemplified in Figure 3.17, and the CD Example 14.

CD Example 14: 1st inversion, 2nd inversion and tonic triad plus octave chordal improvisation with relative major to relative minor tonal ground

3.9 Playing in and out of meter

Having written earlier about the significant effect of pulse and tempo on improvised music, I would also like to explain the relevance and power of meter. Not only do we find the need to ground our improvised music in a stable pulse, with or without changes in tempo, but meter is often present in the rhythm and tempo of the music. Meter can act as a valuable 'anchor' in defining the structure of the music, but it can also function as a musical 'prison', where the presence of strong beats confirmed by regular accentuation establishes a fixed pattern.

The common meters, such as 4/4, 3/4, 2/4, provide clear accents in the music. Compound time, with meters such as 6/8, 9/8 or 6/4 offer different possibilities for strong beats, and irregular meters, such as 5/4 or 7/8, give us a sense of structure with either a syncopated or cross rhythmic effect. Another of the values of providing an established meter is that it allows the development of syncopated playing with unexpected and irregular accents.

Figure 3.18 shows the different meters, and goes on to introduce a chordal improvisation that develops into using 6ths, 1st and 2nd inversions. The example shows the changing meters in the musical material, interspersed with sections that sustain the pulse, but have abandoned the meter. This illustrates how flexible rhythmic music can be, especially when one also remembers to incorporate rubato, accelerandos and ritardandos.

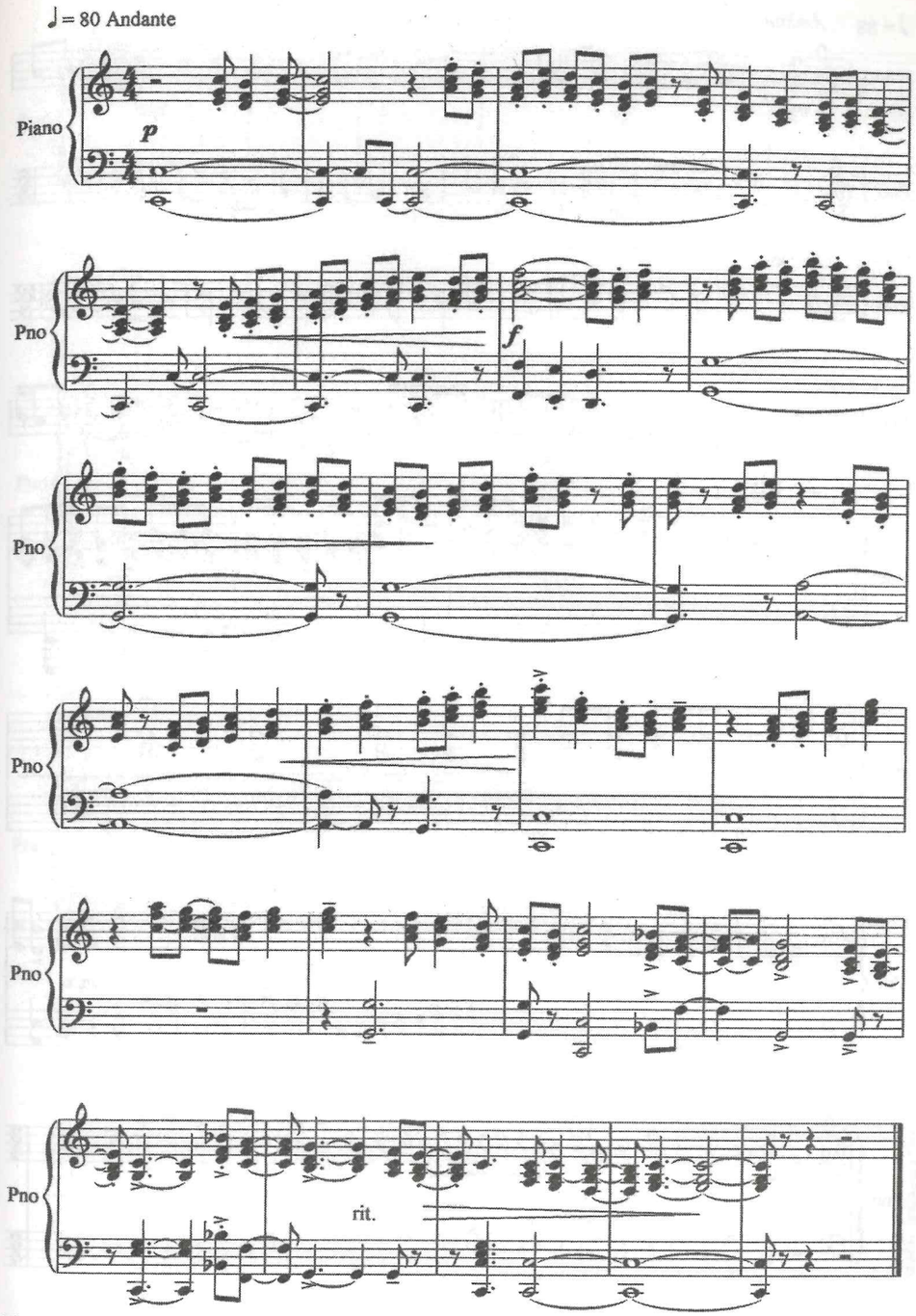


Figure 3.17: 1st inversion, 2nd inversion and tonic triad plus octave chordal improvisation with relative major to relative minor tonal ground

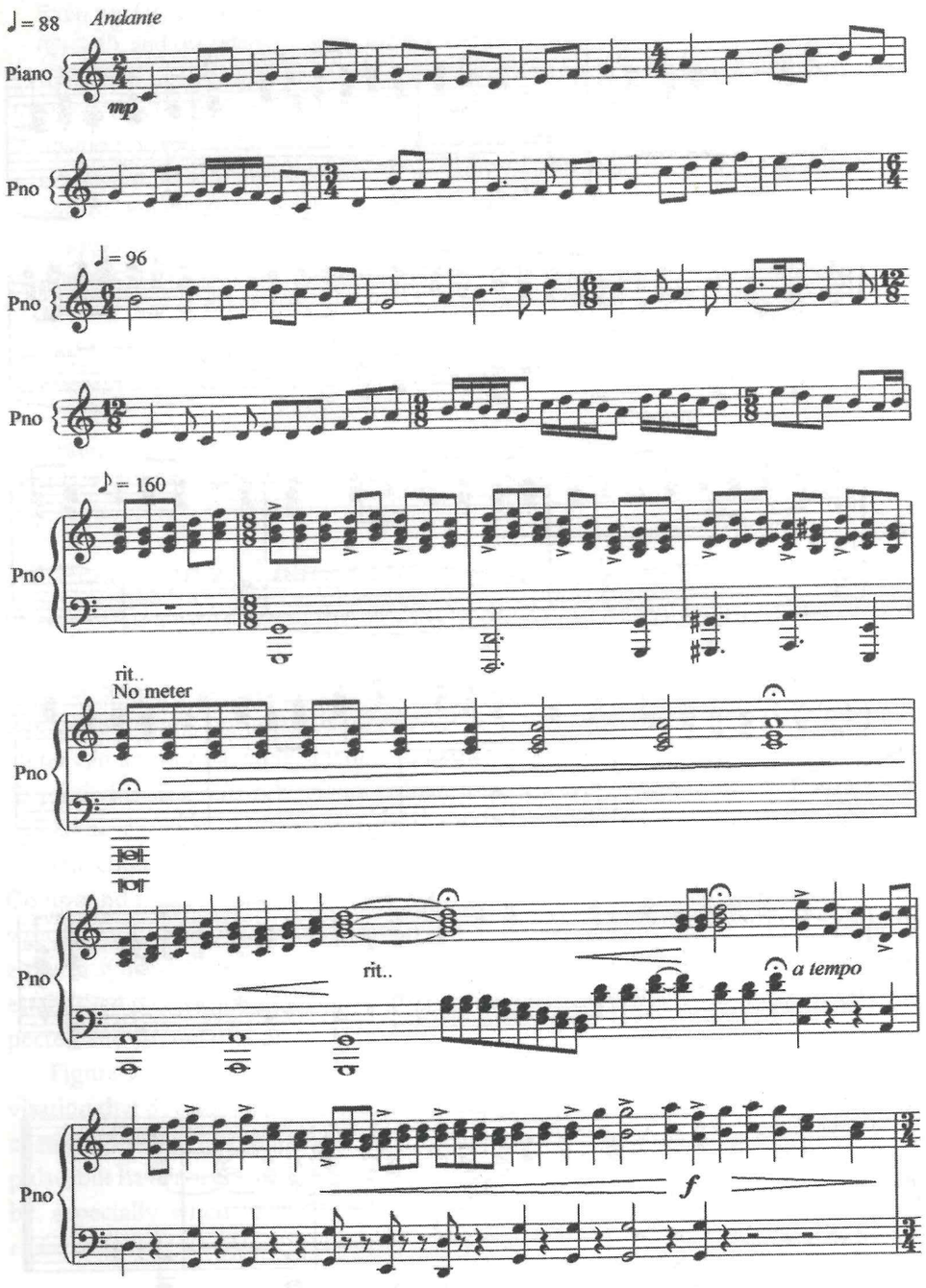
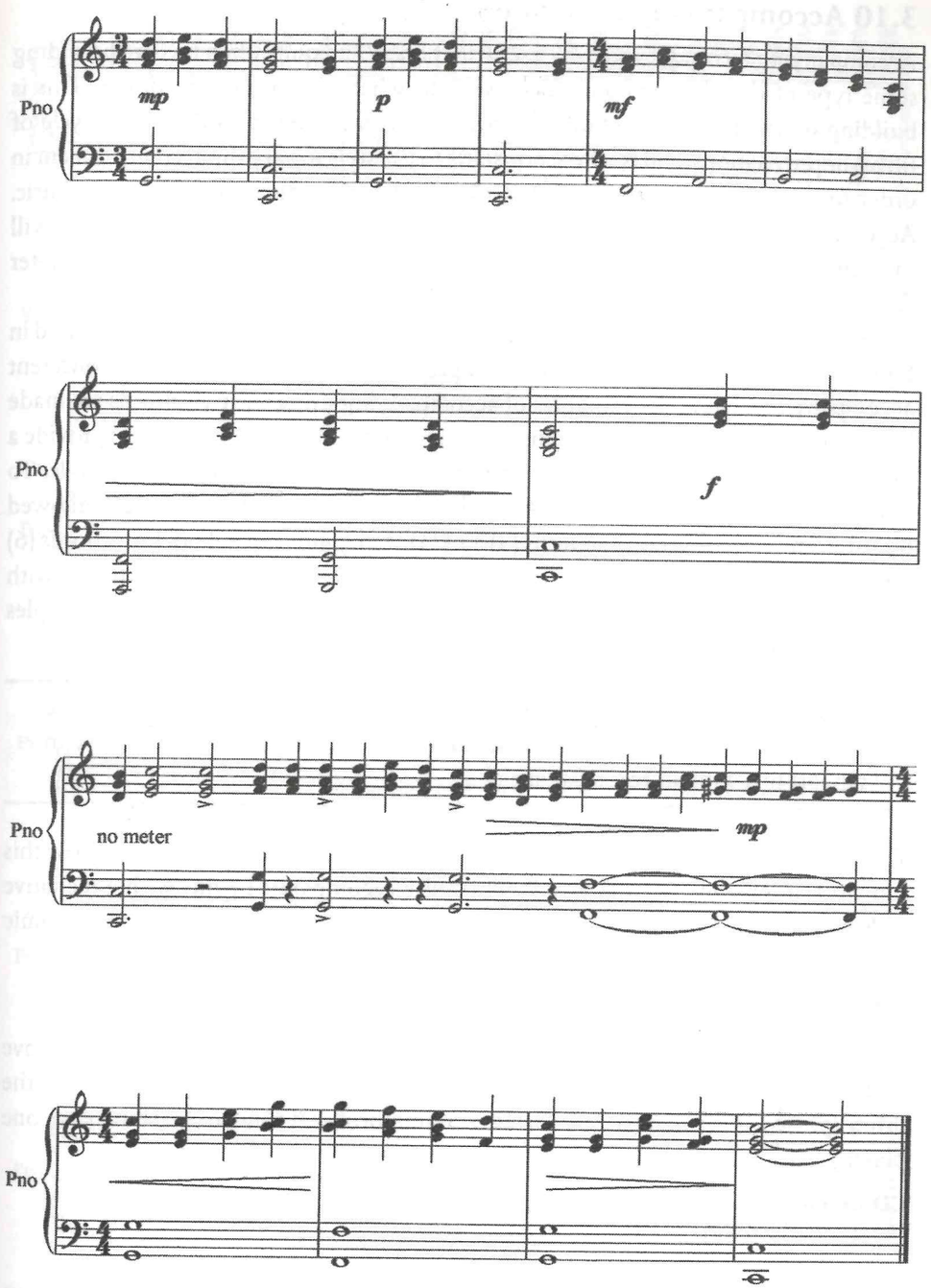


Figure 3.18: Meter, lack of meter, in chords, 6ths and inverted chord improvisations



3.10 Accompanying techniques

Accompanying techniques are very useful in therapy and quite often involve providing some type of chordal harmonic framework to what a client may be doing. This is building on the previous section of two-chord with extended modulations (cycle of fifths) improvisations, and is where one starts to use style to vary the accompaniment in order to support or influence a melodic or rhythmic production in a client's music. Accompanying is a musical technique and also a therapeutic method, so I will introduce it in this chapter as a technique, and then refer to it again in the next chapter for its value in therapy.

Simple accompaniment examples using a two-chord harmony are demonstrated in Figure 3.19, which shows how this simple frame can develop through different accompanying styles. The examples of accompanying using the two chords are made by varying texture, rhythmic patterns, meter and style. The left hand tends to provide a grounding 'dominant/tonic' octave or note, while the right hand varies in style. To begin with, the right hand plays the two chords in crotchets (1), quavers (2), followed by Latin American rhythmic patterns (3) and (4). Arpeggios (5) and off-beat chords (6) are followed by a change of meter to 6/8 (7) and (8). Returning to common time with syncopation is introduced by accents (9) and rests in the music (10), and the examples finish with simple broken chords (11).

Exercise: Imagine a client is playing randomly on a metallophone using one beater to create some melodic phrases and it is the therapist's decision to try to support this with an accompaniment.

These techniques are also demonstrated on the CD (CD15), which illustrates how this can work in practice and the way in which the accompanist begins with a recitative style, followed by establishing some rhythmic ground and then developing a rhythmic figure to support the accompaniment.

CD Example 15: Piano accompanying a metallophone

Percussion instruments are also very good for providing accompaniment and, to move away from the piano for a moment, CD16 gives an example of the usefulness of the drum (played with hands) in providing a supportive accompaniment to someone playing on a xylophone.

CD Example 16: Drum accompanying a xylophone

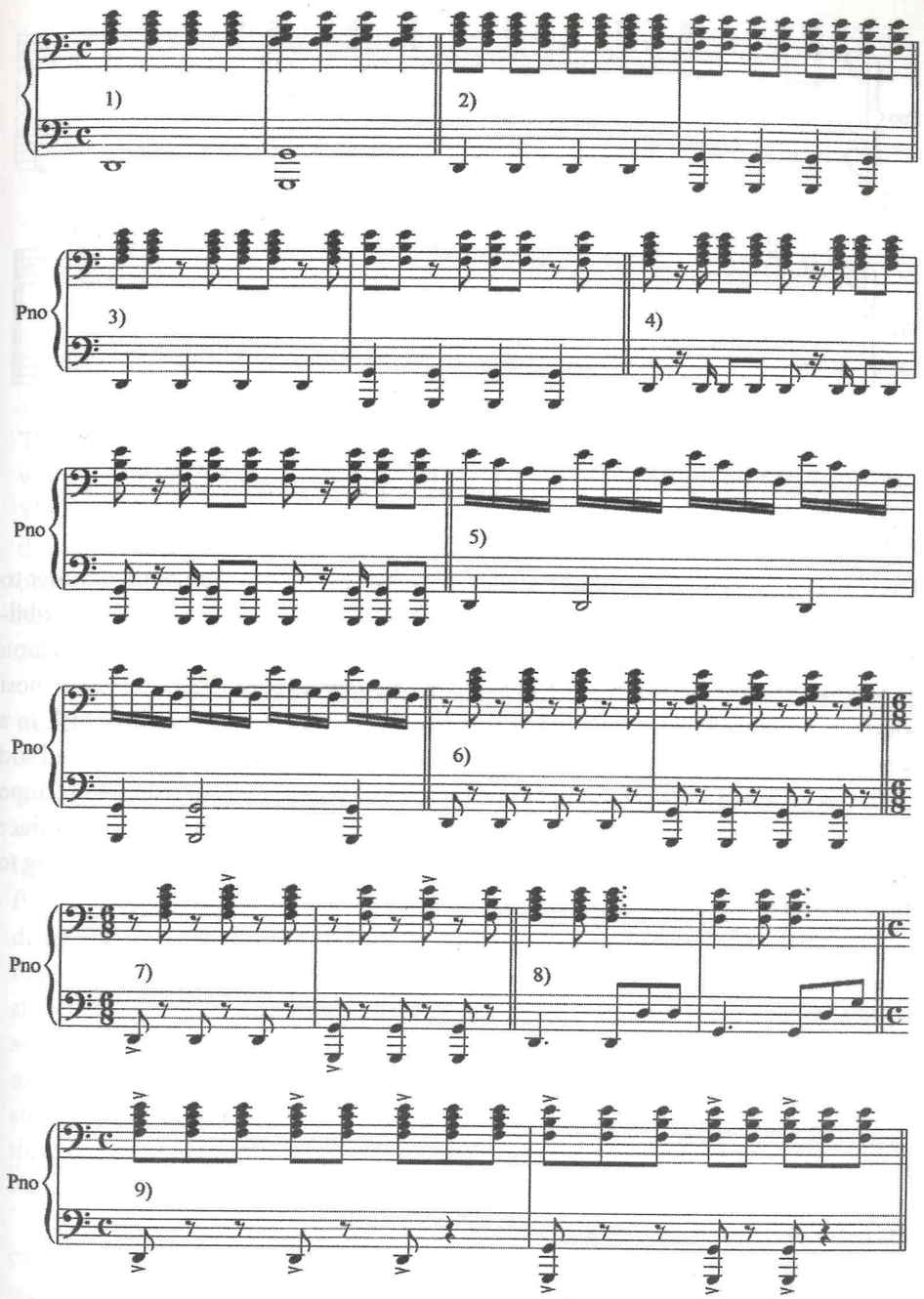


Figure 3.19: Two-chord accompanying in different patterns and styles, continued on next page

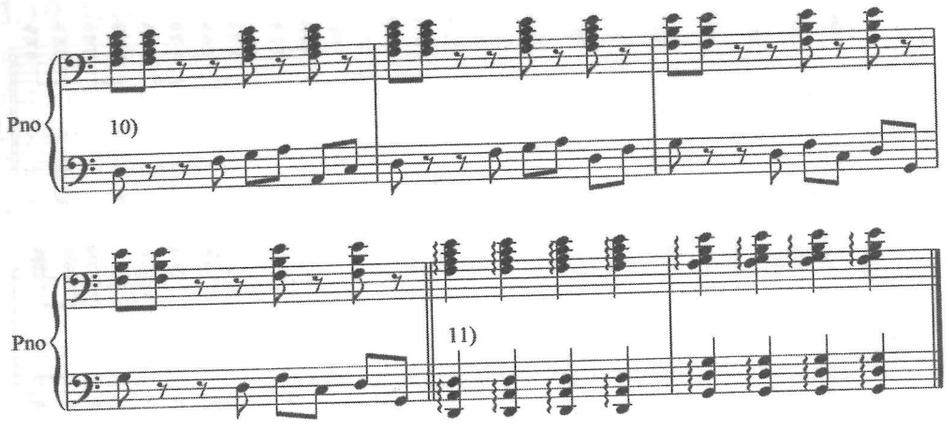


Figure 3.19: Two-chord accompanying in different patterns and styles, continued

3.11 Summary and conclusion

These are a selection of useful techniques with which to begin practising in order to create building blocks for the therapeutic methods that follow. Creativity and flexibility are the primary objectives, and are important factors in developing improvisation that will become musically interesting and therapeutically effective. The most common problem in improvisation is that people find themselves getting stuck in a particular idea and forget all the potential musical variables that can be introduced and deployed to develop the creativity of the improvisation, particularly changes in tempo and changes in volume. Therefore in all the above exercises it is essential to introduce variability of the musical elements in order to add colour, expressivity and meaning to the concrete technique as it is being developed.

CHAPTER 4

Basic Therapeutic Methods and Skills

There are many different therapeutic methods that are applied in music therapy when using improvisation. Bruscia (1987, p.533) began with a description of 64 'clinical techniques' and with the increasing volume of published literature on music therapy over the last 12 years, further techniques and methods used in therapy have been reported (Codding 2000, 2002; Pedersen 2002; Staum 2000; Wigram and Bonde 2002; Wigram and De Backer 1999a, 1999b; Wigram, Pedersen and Bonde 2002).

Therapy methods can either be used intentionally (or intuitively) in therapy work with clients or they can be the objects of analysis when reflecting on a period of free-flowing improvisation to explore what was actually happening. It is not usual for music therapists to pre-plan exactly the method they might use, unless they are working in an activity-based model, or with a structured assessment procedure. In improvisational music therapy, particularly, the model requires an adaptive and flexible response to the way the client begins to make music. There can be a certain degree of planning based on the assessment that has taken place and an estimation of the client's needs and the objectives of therapy that will promote certain techniques above others. However, it is more typical that improvisational music making occurs, and within that music making intuitive judgements about therapeutic method are made based on the 'here and now' experience. Music therapists don't remain exclusively attached to one musical technique or therapeutic method for a set period of time, and might fluctuate between a number of different methods (as well as musical techniques) over the course of a single improvisation.

This chapter presents, discusses and exemplifies certain specific methods that are commonly used in music therapy, in order to provide methods within which the musical techniques that have been described in the previous chapter can be applied.